

Bandwagon

THE JOURNAL OF THE CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY



ROBINSON'S *FAMOUS* SHOWS *AND* ENORMOUS MENAGERIE

MAY-JUNE 1979



THE JOURNAL OF THE CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Vol. 23, No. 3

May-June 1979

Fred D. Pfening, Jr. Editor

Joseph T. Bradbury and Fred D. Pfening III, Associate Editors

BANDWAGON, The Journal of the Circus Historical Society is published bi-monthly. Editorial, Advertising and Circulation office is located at 2515 Dorset Rd., Columbus, Ohio 43221. Advertising rates are: Full page \$65.00, Half-page \$35.00, Quarter page \$18.00, Minimum ad \$12.00.

Subscription rates \$10.00 per year to members, \$10.00 per year to non-members in the United States, \$12.00 per year outside the U.S.A. Single copies \$1.65 each plus 35¢ postage. Application to mail at second class postage rates is pending at Columbus, Ohio.

BANDWAGON (USPS 406-390) is published bi-monthly for \$10 per year by the Circus Historical Society, 800 Richey Rd., Zanesville, Ohio 43701. Second class postage paid at Columbus, Ohio. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to BANDWAGON, 1075 West Fifth Ave., Columbus, Ohio 43212

CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC. Tom Parkinson, President, 42 Lange Ave., Savoy, Ill. 61874; Richard W. Flint, Vice President, 700 Allen Creek Rd., Rochester, N.Y. 14618; Edward L. Jones, Secretary-Treasurer, 800 Richey Rd., Zanesville, Ohio 43701.

DIRECTORS: Div. 1-Fred D. Pfening, Jr., 2515 Dorset Rd., Columbus, Ohio 43221 (Ohio-Mich.-Ind.); DIV. 2-Copeland McAllister, 118 Beacon St., Framingham, Mass. 01701 (Maine-Vt.-N.H.-Mass.-Ct.-Del.); DIV. 3-James Dunwoody, 223 E. Central Ave., Moorestown, N.J. 08057 (N.Y.-N.J.-Pa.-Va.-Md.-D.C.-W.Va.-Ky.); DIV. 4-Joseph T. Bradbury, 1453 Ashwoody Ct., NE, Atlanta, Ga. 30319 (N.C.-S.C.-Ga.-Ala.-Fla.-Miss.-Tenn.-Ark.-La.); DIV. 5-Robert Parkinson, 101 Litchfield La., Baraboo, Wis. 53913 (Wis.-Ill.-Minn.-Iowa-Mo.); DIV. 6-James McRoberts, 1933 Crest Dr., Topeka, Kan. 66604 (N.D.-S.D.-Neb.-Okla.-Tex.); DIV. 7-Joseph S. Rettinger, P.O. Box 20371, Phoenix, Ariz. 85936 (Mont.-Ida.-Wyo.-Col.-N.M.-Utah-Nev.-Ariz.); DIV. 8-Chang Reynolds, 1706 Wagner St., Pasadena, Ca. 91106 (Wa.-Ore.-Ca.-Hawaii); DIV. 9-Edward W. Cripps, 159 Morell St., Brantford, Ont. Can. (Can. and all countries outside U.S.A.)

THIS MONTH'S COVER

This very rare lithograph was used by the Robinson's Famous Shows in 1915. It was printed by the Donaldson Litho Co. The title is in red on a light blue background. Enormous Menagerie is in orange. The original is from the Bill Kasiska collection.

NEW MEMBERS

Boyden L. Crouch #2446
1607 W. Frier Dr.
Phoenix, Arizona 85021

Robert J. Karczewski #2447
1858 S. Long Lake Rd.
Traverse City, Michigan 49684

Clayton Hall #2448
R.R. #1
Dunrobin, Ont., Canada KOA 1T0

Charles J. Levett #2449
Box 156
Cedar Falls, Iowa 50613

Marion Briggs #2450
910 Velvet Pl. N.W.
Canton, Ohio 44709

Carl A. Bly #2451
5402 Leeway Ct.
Fairfax, Va. 22032

James Forrest #2452
46 Nepaugh St.
Hartford, Conn. 06106

Arnold Brito #2453
2212 S.W. 26 Lane #6
Miami, Florida

Thomas A. Maley #2454
Rt. 1, Box 31
Hampton, Georgia 30228

Frank E. Hall #2455
2709 Lakeview Ave.
Regina Sask., Canada S4S-1G4

James H. Brown #2456
1324 Agate St. #5
Redondo Beach, Calif. 90277

William R. Wandrey, Jr. #2457
2722-35th St.
Moline, Illinois 61265

E. William Plant #2458
1554 Victory Dr.
Springfield, Ohio 45505

Howard Gusler #2459
254 Jewett St.
Elgin, Ill. 60120

E. Clark Beurlen #2460
5162 Orchard Green
Columbia, Maryland 21045

B. Lemon #2461
45 Makinak Bay
Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada R2Y 1B8

Don Bulloch #2462
120 Girton Blvd.
Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada R3P 0A5

Keith Crone #2463
27 Roselawn Bay
Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada R2G 1W5

K. Kristjanson #2464
659 Elm St.
Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada R3M 3N8

Joe Polakoff #2465
392 Oxford St.
Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada R3M 3J7

Neal S. Purvis #2466
847 S. Humphrey Ave.
Oak Park, Ill. 60304

Charles T. Bostwich #2467
61 Harrison St.
Janesville, Wisconsin 53545

Hunt Bushnell #2468
10037 Garvey Ave. Sp. 25
El Monte, Calif. 91733

REINSTATED

Delavan M. Wentworth #423
1020 South Mountain
Space #B
Monrovia, Calif. 91016

Chester Kwalek #1956
60 Ringgold St.
Springfield, Mass. 00107

ADDRESS CHANGE REMINDER

When you move and do not advise the BANDWAGON of your new address in advance your magazine is discarded by the post office and a postage due notice is returned to us with a collect charge of 25¢.

As we have advised in the past, your copy of the BANDWAGON cannot be replaced free.

So please, please advise us in advance, so you will not loose your copy and we will not have to hand over 25¢ to the postal service.



SPARKS CIRCUS DAY



SPARKS CIRCUS SEASON OF 1928

By Gordon M. Carver

The season of 1928 for the Sparks Circus in a sense opened only two weeks after the close of the season of 1927. To Charles Sparks the circus business was a year round business. So in the November 7, 1927 issue of *The Billboard* there appeared the first "want" ad for the coming season. Wanted were feature and novelty acts, a troupe of Japs, clowns with walkarounds and plenty of stops, girls to work menage and elephants, a wrestler for the concert, a manager for the side show, and a wagon builder, blacksmith and wood worker. It was asked that the ladies state their age and weight and send a photo. From this latter it was apparent that pulchritude was important.

Since the Manchichi troupe of Japs which had been starred in the 1927 show were to be back, we wonder why they were looking for another "troupe of Japs"? The same goes for the side show manager, for George V. Connors who had filled that position for the last several years would again be back in that role. All we can do at this late date is assume that at the time the ad was placed these persons had not yet signed for the coming season.

As preparations for the season of 1928 began there was not even a hint that this was to be Sparks last year of ownership of the show. Winter quarters were just as busy preparing for the coming summer as they always had been in the past. The usual gossip of show folks during the off season appeared in the various show papers, but little of it had any basis in fact. The only note of any significance, coming at the end of November, was that Jack Phillips, who had been the show's bandmaster, and one of circusdom's

best, since 1913, was retiring from the circus business and would stay at home in Columbus, Ohio. With fifteen years in this capacity on the Sparks Circus he would become the circus bandmaster with the second longest tenure on a single circus, Merle Evans on Ringling Bros.-Barnum & Bailey Combined Shows being the first. While no immediate announcement concerning his replacement was made, he was to be succeeded by Jack Hoyt, a very capable circus musician.

Only two other announcements worthy of mention were made during the winter months. The baby elephant contingent was increased by one so that the herd would now have three babies and six adults making a total of nine elephants on the show. These three babies, it was said, were being trained in a clever routine by Walter McClain to appear as a center ring feature. The other announcement was of the signing of Miacahua, a Brazilian lady wire walker, to replace Naida Miller, who had left in mid-season 1927. Miacahua, as it turned out, was an

Twenty-six horses and two elephants were used to pull this Sparks seat plank wagon out of the mud in Brockville, Ont., on August 8, 1928.

outstanding star who became a feature with the show.

After billing Macon, Georgia, and the surrounding countryside on March 22 for the show's opening date there on April 5, the advance car left for Augusta, the second stand. The advance crew was just slightly under the number that started on the car the year before. All told there were twenty-four men headed by James Randolph as manager, another Sparks oldtimer. Under him he had Joseph Adams, boss billposter with nine men, to cover the fences, barns and other buildings on which a poster could be pasted, both in town and the countryside; Joseph Harkins, boss bannerman with four men to tack up the cloth banners on the high downtown walls; Bobby Johnson, boss lithographer with three men to put up the window displays; and a pastemaker, a truck driver, and a steward to prepare the meals. Also on the car was Press Agent Harry Mack.

As the show began the season of 1928, Macon, as usual gave it a big send off. As in previous years the Al Shihah Shrine Temple joined by the Junior Chamber of Commerce sponsored the event. Two capacity houses gave the show a good start. The weather was ideal, warm and clear. And two days





The nine Sparks elephants posed for this press photo on dress rehearsal day in Macon, Ga. on April 4, 1928.

before, the Manager of the Hotel Dempsey had given the show folks a dance with music furnished by a twelve piece jazz band.

The performance which opened the season was probably the best of Charles Sparks' career. Three quarters of the displays had all three rings busy and all the acts were of uniformly high calibre. All the animal acts had been enlarged. Both the elephant and liberty horse displays now occupied three rings. A new feature of the elephant act was a long mount of all nine bulls on the track at the conclusion of the main act. The wild animal acts were also all larger or had more thrills.

Two new troupes of comedy acrobats added good comedy to the show. The outstanding Hollis-McCree bareback riding troupe of four was also a fine addition with Reno McCree, riding comedian, being exceptionally clever and getting much applause. And again, the Alexander and Manchichi troupes were outstanding in their acrobatic features. But perhaps the biggest hit was the wonderful Brazilian wire walker, Miacahua, who received ovations at all of her performances. All told, the entire program which was opened by the spec "The Wedding of L'Ora, the Jungle Queen", presented and written, both words and music, by J.H. Del Vecchio was a feather in Sparks cap.

Bert Mayo, the Equestrian Director, certainly had to be commended for the show he had put together. Perhaps the only missing element was the high bar act of the Walter Guice Troupe which for so many years had been a feature in the show. In fact the lack of aerial acts, there being only a large swinging ladder act and a double iron jaw number, was the only weak part of the otherwise well rounded three ring show.

After the Macon opening rapid jumps were made to get into the Northeast before some of the larger

shows of the American Circus Corporation could get there. After the second stand, Augusta, they moved into Charleston for Saturday to be followed the next week by Wilmington, N.C., Wilson, Petersburg, Va., Norfolk, Newport News and Richmond. In Petersburg no show was given, however, for it was raining so hard that the show did not even unload but proceeded directly on to Norfolk. The loss of Petersburg was one of the problems of an early opening and trying to get into the Northeast territory early.

The next two weeks starting April 16 at Charlottesville was a period of almost continual rainy and cold weather. The rest of that week they were in Staunton, Lexington, Ronceverte, W.V., Beckley and Charleston. In moving from Staunton to Lexington the railroad used four engines to pull the whole train over the mountains. Starting the succeeding week, Elkins only had an afternoon show in order to be sure of getting to the next stand, Cumberland, Md., on time. Then the next day, Wednesday, at Somerset, Pa., no show could be given because of two inches of snow on the ground. The week ended in Uniontown, Vandergrift and Oil City. During this last week in April there appeared in *The Billboard* the second "want ad" of the season for billers for the advance crew. Up through this early part of the season cold and rainy weather seemed to have been the order, but nevertheless business had held up surprisingly well.

As the season opened the group that ran the Sparks Circus were all ex-

The full lot of the Sparks Circus in Vicksburg, Miss. was photographed from a government tower a half mile from the show grounds on Oct. 9, 1928.



perienced and able circus troupers, several of them having been on the show for a number of years. Charles Sparks was, of course, the owner and Manager assisted by his step-brother, Clifton Sparks, as Assistant Manager. Clinton Shuford was the Treasurer and William Morgan the Secretary, while the show was routed and contracted for by the General Agent T.W. Ballenger assisted by Special Representatives P.N. Branson and Charles B. Fredericks. Fredericks had his first job on a circus, Sells Brothers, in 1876 and had never missed a season in the fifty-three years since.

The advance publicity, other than billing, was handled by Harry Mack whose job was to contract for all newspaper advertising and other advertising requiring special arrangements. Roland Butler, later with the Big One, and Bruce Chesterman saw to it that the newspapers had plenty of human interest stories about the circus to fill their pages before the show arrived in town. Back on the show was Eddie Jackson to put out the welcome mat for the local newspapermen so that their reviews of the show would put it in the best possible light. And in this task he was eminently successful.

Those who were in charge of the working departments, the men who got the show loaded and unloaded, on and off the lot no matter what the conditions and the tents up and down were first of all George Singleton, Superintendent of Canvas, with three assistants. Howard Ingraham with one assistant was responsible for loading and unloading the wagons on the flat cars. Jake Posey with one assistant had the baggage stock while Harry Phillips took care of the ring stock. There was one head blacksmith, Sailor Holcomb. John Hegbin was in charge of the dining department and Java Koen, a veteran from the days of the gas light era, was Superintendent of the electric lights. Bobby Worth was in charge of all the privileges.

The men who headed the various performing groups were first of all Bert Mayo, the Equestrian Director. Franz Woska besides performing various groups of wild animals in the big show was in charge of all the animals in the menagerie, except the elephants which were trained and handled by Walter McClain. George V. Connors was manager of the side show and also, along with Al Greene, made the announcements in the big show and concert. The pit show was run by Captain Scott. Not a performer but closely allied was D.B. Flynn whose men, responsible for the movement and placement of the performers props in the big top, were in large measure the ones who saw that the show moved with speed and zip with no between number delays.

The fifth week opened in Meadville, Pa., to be followed by Youngstown, Ohio, Akron, Mansfield and Toledo. Toledo was a two day stand sponsored by the Zenobia Shrine. Here a very unusual practice was employed. The show paraded both days. The next week starting Sunday, May 6, began with three days in Detroit, to be followed by Lansing, Saginaw, Flint and Pontiac. The following week again started on a Sunday with a return to Detroit for one day only but in a different location. On Monday the show moved into Canada at Windsor where both performances were strawed. Then came Chatham, London, Brantford and St. Catherines with the week ending back in the States at Niagara Falls, N.Y. These last two weeks were interesting for the fact that it had the only town where the show paraded twice, and the only town in which a return date in a different location was played. Except for London where there was an all day rain the short Canadian tour gave the show good business even in Brantford where it also rained.

The week of May 21 was all in New York State at Rochester, Batavia, Ithaca, Auburn, Syracuse and Binghamton. Rochester gave big business as did all of the New York stands. At Batavia there were two capacity houses. In Syracuse, the day before the show appeared there, the *Syracuse Herald* published a schedule of the day's events:

6 a.m.—Sparks Circus trains due to arrive from Auburn.

6:30—Unloading and removal of tents, paraphernalia, wagons, animals to the circus grounds, Lemoyne Park.

7:30—Erecting kitchens, dining, dressing, menagerie, blacksmith, horse tents and side shows.

8:00—Breakfast served to 800 (this is verbatim from the paper—about double the actual) circus employees.

8:30—Hoisting the mammoth white top in which the main performances take place, a lesson in practical efficiency.

11:00—The street parade.

1 p.m.—Doors open for a leisurely inspection of the menagerie. Band concert from 1 to 2 p.m.

2:00—Afternoon performance starts concluding with the mammoth spectacle "The Flag of America" with 700 people and 500 horses.

6:00—Concert of popular and classical music played on the world's largest steam piano, which can be heard five miles without the use of radio-phones. (The folks in the neighborhood must have appreciated that).

7:00—Doors opened to the public. Inspection of the menagerie. Band concert augmented by J.H. Del Vecchio, master air calliapist.

8:00—Evening performance of the

circus, complete in every detail.

11:00—Concerted night movement to the circus trains.

12:00—Departure of the circus trains for Binghamton.

This was just part of one of five articles appearing in the paper during the two weeks prior to the arrival of the show and was fairly typical of the kind of coverage that newspapers gave to circuses at that time. It was also mentioned that in addition to the regular paying audience the show entertained free of charge about 200 orphans of all denominations from Syracuse and surrounding towns, one group coming from Onandaga by train, the railroad furnishing free rail fare.



The four horse stock cars carried ninety head of baggage stock and fifty-four head of ring stock, including four rosinbacks, sixteen ponies, thirty-four menage, liberty and wild west horses.

The show was again being transported on twenty cars, most except for the coaches having been built by the Mt. Vernon company. The original six steel flats and two stocks obtained in 1922 came from that company but it is believed that the additional three flats obtained, two in 1925 and one in 1926 to bring the total to the final number of nine, came from the Venice Transportation Co. The circus flat cars manufactured by both of these companies were almost identical in appearance so lacking any positive records, both of these companies being long out of business, there is no way of being certain about this.

Similarly, the first two all steel stocks the show acquired were 72 footers from the Mt. Vernon company while the final three 70 footers were from the Warren Company. At any rate the show in 1928 moved on nine 72 foot flats, three 70 foot and two 72 foot stocks and five coaches. There was, of course, one car in advance which gave the show a total of 20 cars. It was a heavy train which in part accounted for the necessity of two and sometimes

three or four engines to get it over some of the hilly country that the show played in Appalachia and parts of Canada.

The week of May 29 opened at Newburgh, N.Y., where they had capacity in the afternoon and a straw house in the evening. It was one of the big days of the season. They then moved into New Jersey at Glen Rock followed by Englewood, the home of Mrs. Charles "Lone Eagle" Lindbergh, where business was not very good, Montclair and Westfield. In Westfield as always they did well. The week ended at Stapleton on Staten Island. Here an unusual incident occurred with international overtones. The lot was on the

waterfront and nineteen Chinese coolie seamen mutineered when they were not allowed off the ship, which was docked within sight of the circus, to see the show. However, they were subdued, put in the brig, and did not make it to the circus. Also here a new menagerie top and three new draft stock tops were put into the air.

The following week of June 4 was spent in their annual visit to Long Island in Jackson Heights, Richmond Hill, Queens, Bayside, Far Rockaway, and Hempstead. As usual there were many visitors from the outdoor show world and others from Broadway. Business as usual was good.

The next week, the eleventh, the show made a long jump of about 175 miles over the East and Hudson Rivers into Pennsylvania to Scranton. This was followed by Bethlehem, Pottstown, Pottsville, Mount Carmel and Hazelton. It was another week of good business but of no outstanding events. Then starting June 18 came a week of New York towns before the show entered Canada for one of the longest stays there in its history, eight weeks.

As had been the standard in the preceding couple of years the parade, that was to make its way downtown at 10 a.m. in each of the towns on its route, was both unusual and outstanding. By



Wagon No. 43 contained a water tank in the bottom half and carried the tables for the cookhouse on the top.

1928 virtually all of the large railroad circuses had given up the street pageant as the lots got further and further from downtown and the traffic got heavier and heavier. However, Charles Sparks and Clifton Sparks still found it both practical and useful to give a "Free Street Pageant" to the people of the towns they played in. Perhaps it was because the majority of the towns they played in tended to be slightly smaller than those the larger shows visited and thus the factors of lot location and traffic were not as much of a problem as it was to the others. But whatever the reason, the parade did get the show much favorable local newspaper publicity and no doubt had a very noticeable good effect at the box office.

On the opening day in Macon the parade was augmented by the band of the sponsoring organization, the Shriner's Al-Shihah Band of 40 pieces which was followed by a large delegation of local Shriners on foot.

Then came the circus parade as it was to appear in each of the towns during the summer.

1—Mounted parade marshall and two flag bearers.

2—Dancing Girls Tab, wagon #25 with eight musicians from the big show band pulled by eight dapple gray horses with a driver and helper.

3—Cage of monkeys with one driver pulled by four black horses.

4—Cage #10 with carved corner statues holding five polar bears with a driver and helper pulled by six dapple gray horses.

5—One man and twelve ladies mounted wearing English riding costumes.

6—Cage #12 with carved corner statues holding five lions with a driver and helper pulled by six dapple gray horses.

7—Cage of spotted deer with a driver pulled by four dapple gray horses.

8—Air calliope with a driver and helper pulled by eight black ponies. J.H. Del Vecchio played the instrument.

Sometimes during the season this wagon was pulled by one of the two Mack trucks.

9—Cage of lions with a driver pulled by four dapple gray horses.

10—Cage of tigers with a driver pulled by four dapple gray horses.

11—Dolphin tab wagon with eight musicians from the big show band, a driver and helper pulled by eight dapple gray horses.

12—Cage of four leopards with a driver pulled by four dapple gray horses.

13—Cage of kangaroos and two ostriches with a driver and pulled by four dapple gray horses.

14—Horses Head tab wagon with clown band of six, a driver and helper pulled by six dapple gray horses.

15—Cage of four leopards with a driver pulled by four dapple gray horses.

16—Cage #11 with carved corner statues holding three tigers with a driver and helper and pulled by six dapple gray horses.

17—Dolphin tab wagon with the side show band of eight, a driver and helper pulled by six dapple gray horses.

18—Cage of hyenas and two black leopards with a driver pulled by four dapple gray horses.

19—Cage of three sea lions with a driver pulled by four dapple gray horses.

20—Wild west contingent of twelve mounted people.

21—Five camels in single file each with a groom dressed in Turkish costumes either riding or leading the animal.

22—Three zebras abreast with one groom dressed in a Turkish costume riding the center animal.

23—Three llamas led by two grooms.

24—Nine elephants in single file, a mahout on the head of each, the lead bull carrying a girl in a howdah. All had advertising banners unlike earlier days of the show when this commercialization of the show was not practiced.

25—Steam calliope pulled by six dapple gray horses with a driver and a helper. In the calliope was Harry Wills, the player, and a fireman. Later



The performers of the "Old Plantation Show" appear on the bally platform for a side show opening. This same bannerline was used in 1927.

in the season when there was a shortage of drivers the calliope was pulled by the other Mack truck with a brakeman riding on the wagon.

This parade stretched out to about one half to one third of a mile in length, only about one half the length of the Ringling-Barnum parade in its heyday. It took about ten to twelve minutes for it to pass and certainly was worth the time spent by the locals to watch it. Unlike most shows which were still parading or had paraded in the past all the cages were open. Nothing was held back for the paying customers, one of the reasons it got such a good press.

To summarize there were twelve cages, two calliopes, and four tableau or band wagons for a total of eighteen wagons. These were all pulled by 88 horses and 8 ponies except when the two Macks were used when the draft horses were cut to 82. Including the wild west group there were 28 riders and saddle horses. Finally there were nine elephants, five camels, three zebras and three llamas. Including all the drivers and helpers, bands and other persons 108 people participated in the parade—a real spectacle, one of those things of the past that today's people no longer can enjoy.

The week of June 18 was spent entirely in New York State at Rome, where after leaving and on its way to Fulton a camel was born. Then came Potsdam, Massena, Malone and Saranac Lake. These smaller towns in the northern part of the state were a kind of preparation for the visit to Canada which was to start the following week and last for eight weeks through August 18. This tour was one of the longest visits to Canada in the show's history. It was broken only by a three day return to northern Maine at Houlton, Caribou and Woodstock at the beginning of August. This Canadian trip was unusual also in that only two of its largest cities were visited, Ottawa and Quebec, for one day each, June 30 and July 2. Neither Toronto nor Montreal

saw the show. This was surprising for they had been regular stops for Sparks in earlier years. Another surprise was a two day stand at Sydney, N.S., a town at the time of only about 30,000 population.

While the tour north of the border brought no major events there were a few items worth reporting. In the second week there, after Quebec, they moved northward into territory where railroad engines and track were barely adequate for the show so that they began moving in two sections, rather a novelty for a twenty car show. Then on a Sunday run of 320 miles from Chicoutimi to St. Hyacinthe the elephant car, a stock car and three flats left the rails. No damage to equipment was sustained with all the wagons staying on the flats. With typical circus ingenuity, using the elephants, Howard Ingram and his train crew had all the cars back on the rails and ready to move before the railroad wrecking crew arrived. At the next stand in Sherbrooke it was necessary to cancel the parade because of the steep hills in town. Then on Thursday, July 12, at Victoriaville only a matinee was given but the big top was jammed.

Following Riviere du Loup, the first stand in New Brunswick was Bathurst on Saturday, July 14, which had not had a circus in nineteen years. Again there was a long Sunday run of 338 miles including a ferry ride to Port Borden, Prince Edward Island. This town was the smallest, with a population of only about 600 that the show had played in some years but it gave the show two capacity houses drawing from the entire island. The parade route was only two blocks long. Since the parade was over half a mile long this meant that the first units were arriving back at the lot before the last ones had left. It was a very unique situation.

The rest of the Canadian tour which gave the show almost uniformly good weather, cool and clear, was uneventful until near the end on August 8 at Brockville, Ont. Here heavy rains the day before had made the lot an almost bottomless mudhole. It was eleven a.m. before the last wagon got onto the lot. Many of the wagons required 24 horses or more with the elephants pushing to move them through the mud. No parade was given but a matinee was put on at 3 p.m. Then it was decided to cancel the evening show and take advantage of as much daylight as possible to get the show off the lot. Even so it was 11 p.m. before all was ready to move on to Perth, the next stand. The fine Canadian tour finally ended the next week on Saturday, August 18, at Sarnia.

For the whole Canadian tour they had no competition from any other circus, a rather surprising situation, and business as a whole had been



The Sparks show was still using Roland Butler newspaper ads as late as 1928, the last year under the ownership of Charles Sparks.

outstanding. All along the route almost without exception the press had been generous in its praise of the show which of course had been of much help.

The one part of the 1928 Sparks Circus about which little or no data is available was the midway. We know there was a side show with a bannerline thirteen banners long including the double-width entrance banner. We also know that it was under the management of George V. Connors but we have no record of the attractions. There are indications that for the

Edward Keltly visited the Sparks Circus in Far Rockaway, L.I., N.Y. and took this group photo of the performers and staff on June 8, 1928.



first time some "freaks" were on view—a tall man and a midget, but we are not at all sure of this. For the rest we can assume it was much the same as in former years with a colored band and minstrels, a snake charmer, sword swallower, magician and Hawaiian dancers plus other novelty acts to fill out the program of ten or twelve acts. Also on the midway we know there was some sort of a pit show under the direction of Captain Scott, but again no details as to attractions.

By mid-season the program was moving nicely:

1—Grand entry spec, "The Wedding of L'Ora, the Jungle Queen", sung by Alice Sohn, prima donna, George Sohn, baritone, and Juanita Gray, mezzo soprano.

2—In the end rings riding dogs and ponies were presented by Jack Casteel and Jim Sanders. In the center ring Harriett Guilfoyle had her trained leopards closing her act with a leopard that made a long distance leap from a high pedestal onto her back.

3—In the end rings Bert Mayo and Jim Sanders had horses kicking footballs to the audience.

4—Again in the end rings there was Jack Casteel with high diving dogs at one end of the top and at the other end the Manchichi Duo in oriental balancing.

5—Franz Woska here presented his outstanding act of seven polar bears in the steel arena. This was one of the outstanding features of the show and was worthy of its spot-lighted position.

6—The first aerial act was over the hippodrome track and had twelve girls on swinging ladders. They were Lorraine Casteel, Della Bonhomme, Ethel Lewis, Mildred Termine, Ullaine Malloy, Perry Lancton, Billie Burton, Gladys Harrington, Jamie Graves,

Polly Watkins, Marion Shuford and Ione Carl. Most of these young ladies were new to Sparks Circus.

7—In each of the end rings Ladies Principal Bareback Riding was displayed by Bessie Hollis and Isabelle Cummings.

8—In one end ring Della Bonhomme had trained military ponies while in the other ring trained dogs were shown by Lorraine Casteel. In the center arena Chubby Guilfoyle had an exciting nine lion "fighting" group, two more animals than in 1927.

9—In ring one Jack Casteel presented trained pigs, an act that always went over well in the rural areas where pigs were an important aspect of life. In the other end ring Bert Mayo presented three trained sea lions. In the center steel arena Franz Woska had his big group of ten tigers which featured an eighteen foot leap by one of the tigers. This was the big wild animal act of the show.

10—Now came two acts new to Sparks. While the arena in the center ring was being dismantled the other two rings were occupied by the Spaulding Trio, and Shultz, Kress and Krue in comedy acrobatics.

11—In this number the entire clown contingent of fifteen put on a burlesque of a Mexican bullfight on the hipodrome track. Paul Wenzel was the producing clown. He, Charley Fortuna and Ray Glaum were the only ones who had been with the show in 1927. Others who participated whose names were to become well known were Stanley White, Joe Lewis and Lew Hershey, who became well known as a clown cop.

12—In all three rings Ione Carl, Jamie Graves and Billie Burton presented the elephants trained by Walter McClain. The three babies were in the center ring. After the act was over the nine bulls lined up on the track for long mount in front of the reserves with Ione Carl heading them.

13—This was an outstanding number. The four people, Melvin

(Pinkie) Hollis, Bessie Hollis, Isabelle Cummings and Reno McCree, riding comedian, troupe of bareback riders were exceptionally clever. Everywhere their act was very well received.

14—In rings one and three the Manchichi troupe of six and the Alexander teeterboard troupe of seven gave performances that won many ovations.

15—Again the clowns came on, this time in a big walkaround number with some twelve participating. Besides those previously mentioned two of the Alexanders and Reno McCree also came on.

16—As the program neared its end the center ring was turned over to the marvelous tightwire performer from Brazil, Miachahua. This young woman also received much praise along the route.

17—Now Sparks presented the big liberty horse number with six horses in each end ring worked by Bert Mayo and Jack Casteel, and seven in the center ring under Jim Sanders. Bert Mayo was the trainer.

18—The second aerial number had the two Alexander Sisters over one ring and Jamie Graves and Ray Glaum (in female attire) over the other end ring in an iron jaw turn.

19—The closing number had twelve horses and riders led by Bert Mayo in an outstanding menage act. The specialty horses were ridden by Bert Mayo, Lorraine Casteel, Ione Carl and Billie Burton. Ione Carl and Ruby Hoyt rode high jumping horses. Other riders were Della Bonhomme, Ethel Lewis, Juanita Gray, Gladys Harrington, Polly Watkins, Alice Foster and Marion Shuford.

One part of the show which was common to almost all circuses of that day but never listed in the program was the "come in". As the audience filed into the big top from the menagerie to find their seats, a clown dressed in outlandish woman's attire would accost various men as they walked the track. It was all done in pantomime. All sorts of ploys would be used by the clown depending on the response of their "victim", some of

whom were embarrassed, some confused, some coy and some entering into the spirit of fun. Ray Glaum, assisted by Charley Fortuna and Gladys Harrington, was a past master at this routine and regularly kept the audience in stitches with his antics.

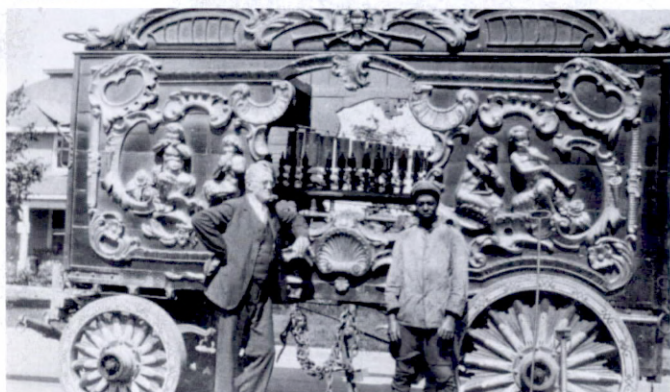
While no longer than other programs of recent years, running just under two hours, it had more performers and greater quality than before. Excluding the band of sixteen pieces there were about sixty performers involved in the show—about twenty-five ladies and thirty-five men. Of the men about fifteen were clowns or comic acrobats. Of the remaining men nine were animal trainers of one sort or another. Of the ladies eight were in the aerial ladder number and menage and four were in the menage number and the wild west concert.

After the long stay in Canada one date in Ohio at Defiance followed by five in Indiana at Warsaw, Marion, Newcastle, Greensburg and Lawrenceburg completed what might be called the northern tour for the next week found the show in Kentucky at Maysville, Danville, Lexington and Somerset and then into Tennessee at Harriman and Knoxville. Starting at Somerset rain was to dog the show for a solid week.

At Knoxville the rain caused the cancellation of the parade. Also there the *Knoxville News-Sentinel* ran a contest offering a prize of twenty free tickets to the show. Then on Monday, September 3, in Asheville, N.C., the show had to obtain on arrival a new lot because the contracted one was a quagmire. After Asheville the show moved back and forth between North and South Carolina. The twenty-fourth week was spent in Winston-Salem, Danville, Va., and then back to North Carolina for the rest of the week at Durham, Raleigh, where they had a bill hit on a downtown office building of 205 sheets, the second largest ever put

The Hollis-McCree troupe of bareback riders included Pinky Hollis, Bessie Hollis, Alice Sohn, Isobel McCree and Reno McCree.

Harry Wills, "King of the calliopists" is pictured in 1928 with his steam boiler fireman.



up by the show, Greensboro and High Point.

The week of September 17 completed the state of South Carolina with stops at Spartansburg, Greenville, Anderson and Greenwood. On Friday they moved into Athens, Ga., the home of the University of Georgia. Here, as Joe Bradbury reports, there was a near clem with the students at the evening show but the police getting wind of the probable trouble arrived at the lot before the students, arrested the ringleaders and sent the rest back to the campus, except those who wanted to get into the show in the accepted way—by buying a ticket. The week ended at Cedartown. All during this period the John Robinson Circus was in opposition with it following Sparks into Athens three weeks later on October 12.

The after show or concert in 1928 was a wild west performance. However, data on this part of the show is virtually non-existent. Early in the season there was an ad in *The Billboard* for a wrestler for the concert but we have been unable to learn definitely whether or not one was obtained, although it is our guess that it was. No list of wild west performers among the men is given but Jim Sanders, animal trainer in the main performance, had been listed in previous years as a wild west performer and probably acted in this capacity in 1928 as well. There were probably one or two other men who donned cowboy hats and chaps for the concert too but we have no record of who they were. The only ones we can be sure of are four girls, Marion Shuford, whose husband was the show Treasurer, Juanita Gray, Alice Foster and Ruby Hoyt, all of whom were also in the big show. Why no data on this facet of the show was, for this one year, missing we do not know.

The whole last week in September starting the twenty-fourth found Sparks in Georgia at Rome, Newnan, Thomaston, Americus, Albany and Thomasville. These towns were typical of Sparks routing in the South. All except Rome and Albany were in the neighborhood of 15,000 population. Thus it would take about half the people in each of them to give the show two full houses. Even two half houses, the general breakeven requirement on



The Menagerie top wagon No. 65 is about to follow the stake driver off the runs in Barrie, Ont., on Aug. 14, 1928.

most shows, would require an unusually large proportion of the population visiting the show in any one of them. In today's market this seems a rather high expectation but which at that time was apparently pretty regularly met.

Next the show moved into Alabama at Dothan and Florala followed by its only stop in Florida, Pensacola. Then came Mobile, Gulfport and Hattiesburg, a Saturday date. Instead of moving on Saturday night it stayed on in Hattiesburg through Sunday in order to have all its stock dipped for the prevention of hoof and mouth disease, a state regulation. While there, the Walter L. Main Circus stopped for the same purpose and there was much visiting between the showfolk. Also at Hattiesburg a picture of the whole show was taken from a high bluff overlooking the fairgrounds lot. This is perhaps the best picture ever taken of the whole show in its last years. Every top except the padroom which is hidden behind the big top is visible.

After this the show continued through Mississippi and then into Arkansas where it encountered poor weather through October 25 at Forrest City where it had a late arrival. Although the first wagon did not get off the flats until 10 a.m. the parade left the lot at 1:15, doors were opened at 2:15 and the show started at 2:30, only a half hour late. This was typical of the abili-

Seven of the Sparks loaded flats show how heavily the circus was loaded.

ty of the show's staff and working crew to overcome problems. That week ended in Corinth, Miss., and Decatur, Ala.

The year of 1928 is the first for which there is any available wagon list. And in fact there are four. While for the most part the lists agree on the loads carried by the various wagons there are differences in the lengths and wagon numbers. Some wagon numbers do not agree with dated photos and some wagon lengths are obviously misstated when compared with photos. Further the wagon lengths given total up to more than the nine flats they were loaded on so that there have to be some errors. Width dimensions for other reasons are also suspect in some cases.

The wagon list which follows has taken these errors into account and where possible corrections have been made. Only those wagon numbers we feel reasonably certain of are shown. As to wagon lengths, they have been corrected based on some established data and the use of photographic perspective calculations and we now feel are about as accurate as they can be at this late date. As to the width, most were six feet, external, five and a half, interior, except the cages which were five and a half and five respectively. As to the heights, there was some variety but most baggage and tab wagons had an external body height of six feet, with cages a half foot less.

Wagon #	Load and Des.	Length
4	Cookhouse	18
43	Dining top and tables (bottom half a water tank)	12
5	Stables and blacksmith	16
65	Menagerie top	16



Office	14
36 Side show canvas, poles and props	16
56 Side show trunks (Halloween or Clowns Behind the Curtains tab) ..	14
18 Concessions (Jockey and Horse Head tab)	14
29 Air calliope	10
50 Steam calliope	12
14 Trained dogs and pigs	12
51 Seat planks, Starbacks and blues ..	13
52 Seat planks, Starbacks and blues ..	13
53 Seat planks, Starbacks and blues ..	13
11 Jacks	14
7 Stringers	22
40 Wardrobe (Dolphin tab)	14
5 Props	16
25 Trunks (Dancing Girls tab) ..	14
60 Padroom and trappings	16
3 Arena props	12
41 Big top canvas	11½
42 Big top canvas	11½
15 Poles	28
91 Lights generator	18
92 Lights generator	9
93 Lights generator	9
94 Lights generator	9
10 Cage (panelled corners) polar bears	16
11 Cage (carved lion corners) lions ..	16
12 Cage (carved figure corner) tigers	16
16 Cage, monkeys	12
18 Cage, spotted deer	12
27 Cage, lions	12
29 Cage, tigers	12
30 Cage, leopards	12
32 Cage, kangaroo and ostrich ..	12
35 Cage, leopards	12
38 Cage, panther and hyena	12
24 Cage, sea lions	12
Mack truck with open box body ..	14
Mack truck with open body and hoist	16

The total length of all these wagons is just 41 feet less than the total flat car length or a little over 4 feet per car for the space between wagons and at the ends of the cars. We can therefore reasonably assume, I believe, that the lengths given are as near correct as we can hope for at this late date, 50 years after the fact.

When the show opened in Macon it had a mostly new set of canvas headed by the big top, larger than any previously used. It was a 140 foot round with three 50 foot middles. This was ten feet larger than the 130 foot top used in 1927. While some reports have stated that it had only one fifty and two forty foot middles at the start of the season and that the two forties were replaced by two fifties later in the season there is no indication that this was true. All the pictures of which I have six show the top with 50 foot middles. Further since the top was new it does not make sense that two of the middles would be replaced during the season. And finally, it is pretty well documented that Sparks had used nothing but 50 foot middles in its big top for the previous three or four years.



This unusual photo shows three teams of elephants pulling a group of cages to the lot in Spartanburg, S.C., on Sept. 17, 1928.

82 Stake and chain	14
9 Stake driver	10

The menagerie top was also good sized to house the large complement of animals that a show of this size carried. It was a 70 foot round with four 30 foot middles. The side show was the same as it had been for the last few years, a 60 foot round with two 30 foot middles. Fronting the side show was a bannerline about 140 feet long with six single width banners, two doubles and a double width entrance banner. Also on the midway was a pit show fronted by five half banners in a 30 by 60 foot hip roof top. There were also two concession tops on the midway.

The thirty-first and last full week of the 1928 season starting October 27 was spent entirely in Alabama at Cullman, Tuscaloosa, Gadsden, Anniston, Sylacauga and Roanoke all to very good business. The last stand of the season came the following Monday, November 5, at Columbus, Ga., after which the show moved back to winter quarters in Macon for the last time under the ownership of Charles and Clifton Sparks.

The show had traveled 15,374 miles visiting nineteen states and three provinces of Canada. Eight performances were lost due mostly to bad weather. While business was off just a bit from previous years also due mostly to bad weather for the most part in the early months of the tour, it was still a very successful season.

For a few years prior to 1928 there had been rumors that the Sparks Circus was to sold none of which had materialized. Then suddenly, less than three weeks after the show's return to winter quarters, it was announced on November 26 that Charles and Clifton Sparks had sold the show to H.B. Gentry. Gentry had formerly been the most successful manager of the Sells-Floto Circus under both the Tammien and Bonfils ownership and later that of the American Circus Corp. Earlier he and his brothers had operated the very successful Gentry Bros. Dog & Pony Shows. Actually, as it turned out, Gentry was only a front man for the Mugivan-Bowers American Circus Corp., group to whom Sparks had earlier refused to sell because he did not approve of their "grifting" operating methods. No report of the

price was ever made but we can assume it was a good one for Sparks Circus was a valuable property—both the equipment and reputation.

And so the Sparks Circus under the ownership and guidance of the Sparks family came to an end. It had been a most successful business and while it was to continue on the road for another three years, one under the American Circus Corp., ownership and the others under the Ringlings who bought out the American Circus Corp., except for 1929 it never again was quite the same.

SPARKS CIRCUS ROUTE 1928

APRIL—5, Macon, Ga.; 6, Augusta; 7, Charleston, S.C.; 8, Wilmington, N.C.; 9, Wilson; 11, Petersburg, Va.; 12, Norfolk; 13, Newport News; 14, Richmond; 15, Charlottesville; 17, Stanton; 18, Lexington; 19, Ronceverte, W.Va.; 20, Beckley; 21, Charleston; 22, Elkins; 24, Cumberland, Md.; 25, Somerset, Pa.; 26, Uniontown; 27, Vandergrift; 28, Oil City; 29, Meadville.

MAY—1, Youngstown, Ohio; 2, Akron; 3, Mansfield; 4, Toledo; 5, Detroit, Mich.; 7, Detroit; 8, Detroit; 9, Lansing; 10, Saginaw; 11, Flint; 12, Pontiac; 13, Detroit; 14, Windsor, Ont.; 15, Chatham; 16, London; 17, Brantford; 18, St. Catharines; 19, Niagara Falls, N.Y.; 21, Rochester; 22, Batavia; 23, Ithaca; 24, Auburn; 25, Syracuse; 26, Binghamton; 27, Newburgh; 28, Glen Rock, N.J.; 30, Englewood; 31, Montclair.

JUNE—1, Westfield; 2, Stapleton, N.Y.; 3, 4, Jackson Heights; 5, Richmond Hill; 6, Queens; 7, Bayside; 8, Far Rockaway; 9, Hempstead; 11, Scranton, Pa.; 12, Bethlehem; 13, Pottstown; 14, Pottsville; 15, Mount Carmel; 16, Hazelton; 18, Rome, N.Y.; 19, Fulton; 20, Potsdam; 21, Massena; 22, Malone; 23, Saranac Lake; 25, Cornwall, Ont.; 26, Kingston; 27, Oshawa; 28, Peterboro; 29, Belleville; 30, Ottawa; 31, S.

JULY—2, Quebec; 3, Three Rivers; 4, Joliette; 5, Shawinigan Falls; 6, Jonquiere; 7, Chicoutimi; 8, St. Hyacinthe; 10, Sherbrooke; 11, Thetford Mines; 12, Victoriaville; 13, Riviere du Loup; 14, Bathurst, N.B.; 16, Port Borden, P.E.I.; 17, Amherst, N.S.; 18, Moncton, N.B.; 19, New Glasgow, N.S.; 20, Sydney; 21, Sydney; 23, Halifax; 24, Bridgewater; 25, Yarmouth; 26, Digby; 27, Kentville; 28, Truro; 29, St. John, N.B.; 31, Fredericton.

AUGUST—1, Houlton, Me.; 2, Caribou; 3, Woodstock; 4, Edmundston, N.B.; 5, 6, Drummondville, Que.; 7, Valleyville; 8, Brockville, Ont.; 9, Perth; 10, Arnprior; 11, Pembroke; 13, Sudbury; 14, Barrie; 15, Stratford; 16, Owen Sound; 17, Goderich; 18, Sarnia; 19, Defiance, Ohio; 21, Warsaw, Ind.; 22, Marion; 23, Newcastle; 24, Greensburg; 25, Lawrenceburg; 27, Maysville, Ky.; 28, Lexington; 29, Danville; 30, Somerset; 31, Harriman, Tenn.

SEPTEMBER—1, Knoxville; 2, Asheville, N.C.; 3, Hendersonville; 4, Gaffney, S.C.; 5, Shelby, N.C.; 6, Rock Hill, S.C.; 8, Gastonia, N.C.; 9, Winston-Salem; 11, Danville, Va.; 12, Durham, N.C.; 13, Raleigh; 14, Greensboro; 15, High Point; 17, Spartanburg, S.C.; 18, Greenville; 19, Anderson; 20, Greenwood; 21, Athens, Ga.; 22, Cedartown; 23, Rome; 25, Newman; 26, Thomaston; 27, Americus; 28, Albany; 29, Thomasville; 30, S.

OCTOBER—1, Dothan, Ala.; 2, Florala; 3, Pensacola, Fla.; 4, Mobile, Ala.; 5, Gulfport, Miss.; 6, Hattiesburg; 7, Natchez; 8, Vicksburg; 10, Kosciusko; 11, Yazoo City; 12, Clarksdale; 13, Blytheville, Ark.; 15, Paragould; 16, Jonesboro; 17, Pine Bluff; 18, Camden; 19, Hope; 20, El Dorado; 22, Hot Springs; 23, Russellville; 24, Conway; 25, Forrest City; 26, Corinth, Miss.; 27, Decatur, Ala.; 29, Cullman; 30, Tuscaloosa; 31, Gadsden.

NOVEMBER—1, Anniston; 2, Sylacauga; 3, Roanoke; 5, Columbus, Ga.; 6, home run; 7, arrival in Macon.

Total miles — 15,374.

AMERICA'S LAST RAILROAD CIRCUS

THE REORGANIZATION OF THE CLYDE BEATTY CIRCUS

By Doyle L. Davis

The Clyde Beatty Circus was an intricate structure of corporations supported by some shaky mortgages, and it was this debt that would cause Clyde Beatty to lose the show. However, the structure of the corporations would allow him to salvage something.

A corporation is useful to allow a person to form a business without putting in jeopardy all that he has. He can only lose what is in the corporation and not his personal property. With this in mind the use of corporations becomes logical as opposed to individual ownership. Clyde Beatty evidently kept personal ownership of his act and some of the elephants and horses. The Monarch Circus Equipment Co. was the corporation that owned the equipment. Therefore, if Monarch went bankrupt it would lose all it had, but Beatty would not lose his act or animals because he kept them out of Monarch and could still keep his acts for winter dates. However, Monarch was only the holding company. National Circus Corporation was formed as the operating company.

I was told one reason for a holding company and an operating company. With only one corporation, an accident could result in the victim suing and getting all the assets (equipment). However, a holding company would own the equipment and lease it to the operating company. An accident would allow the victim to sue the operating company. However, he couldn't get the equipment which is leased from the holding corporation. A corporation can only lose what it owns. On the other hand, an operating company has some problems of borrowing money for operating expenses. Since it was formed to protect assets, it has few assets of its own to secure a loan. Most of its equipment is leased from the holding company or individuals. Therefore, lenders usually ask the holding company or the owner to put up their property as security for loans to the operating company. In the case of the Clyde Beatty Circus, it appeared Beatty was the owner of the corporations, Monarch Circus Equipment Company was the holding company owning the equipment, and National Circus Corporation was the operating company.

The following mortgages existed. Arthur Concello had a first mortgage of about \$49,000 and Frank McClosky and Walter Kernan had a second mortgage of about \$16,000 on the National Circus Corporation. Monarch had pledged the equipment

as security for the loan. It appeared Beatty did not make his act or animals as security for loans to National and therefore protected some of his property.

It would be good if some historian with legal training would produce a more accurate article on the situation that existed when the Clyde Beatty Circus folded. However, until then, the above suppositions are offered. The following article from the *Billboard* should provide a more accurate presentation of the situation that existed shortly after the Beatty show folded in California.

Beatty Firm Files Bankruptcy Petition. Tells \$280,000 Liabilities; Mortgages Held by Concello, McClosky, Kernan. Macon, Ga.

A petition for voluntary bankruptcy of the National Circus Corporation was filed here Friday (18). That company has operated the Clyde Beatty Circus, which folded in California and returned to Deming, N.M., quarters nine days earlier.

The petition lists \$280,000 in liabilities, including mortgages held by Art Concello and by Frank McClosky and Walter Kernan.

At quarters is Frank Orman, vice-president and secretary of the corporation. Also there are Concello, McClosky and Kernan. Beatty was reported both in the East and in Hollywood.

The red ticket wagon on the left, originally built for the 1947 Sparks Circus by the Lewis Diesel Co. Memphis, TN. It was transferred to a truck for the 1957 season and is the only wagon remaining with the Beatty Cole circus in 1979 that was with the rail show in 1956.

Judge E.P. Johnston, Macon, referee in the case, said he would call a meeting of creditors at Macon in June.

Liability Detailed—The court papers reveal that Concello holds a first mortgage on National, and that Monarch Circus Equipment Co., which owns the Beatty shows equipment, pledged that equipment as security for the loan to National. The mortgage is paid up to date but \$48,779.30 will come due in future months. McClosky and Kernan, who operated concessions on the show this season and reportedly loaned money when business proved bad, hold a second mortgage for \$16,200. Other liabilities include \$16,525.86 for wages, \$27,911 in federal taxes, \$7,850 due in salaries to the advance department and agent, and a judgment of \$25,275.60 awarded Roland Miller, former employee, in a personal injury court action at Merced, Calif. recently.

Assets of National were listed as two typewriters, an adding machine and some unused advertising paper, for a total value of \$260. Beatty's cats, act and private car are not involved, and the Monarch company holds the other show equipment, as it has for some years.

Among several possible avenues of action, it was understood, would be for the operating company to go out of business and for the holding company to lease its equipment to some new owner. However, this or any other future action awaited outcome of the creditor's meeting which is to be called. Reports persisted that efforts were to be made to reorganize the show.

A second article in the *Billboard* on June 16, 1956 gave even more details on the situation that existed shortly after the Beatty show folded in California.





Beatty Recites Woes; Talks With Concello—Clyde Beatty, president of the National Circus Corporation, which operated the Clyde Beatty Circus since 1949, testified in federal court here Tuesday (12) that the corporation was "hopelessly" in debt and is bankrupt.

Beatty verified the schedules filed in the bankruptcy division here several weeks ago after the show suddenly closed in Burbank, Calif. Debts were listed as approximately \$265,000, with assets of less than \$300.

The show equipment, railroad train and animals are the property of Monarch Circus Equipment Co., Inc., also a Macon corporation, and were leased to National under a weekly rental agreement, Beatty testified.

Seeks New Money—Monarch is not involved in the bankruptcy proceedings. The hearing testimony showed that mortgages of National for about \$50,000 held by Arthur M. Concello, and \$16,000 held by Frank McClosky and Walter Kernan, were guaranteed by Monarch.

Beatty testified that for three weeks he has been in the East and in Florida and Cuba seeking new money so that some arrangements could be made to take the show out again but so far he has been unsuccessful.

Concello, McClosky and Kernan came here from Sarasota, Fla., and held several conferences with Beatty, but they did not appear at the creditor's meeting or take any action in the National bankruptcy.

Judge E.P. Johnston, referee, commented that few claimants had filed proofs of claims against National and no objections to the bankruptcy had been received by the court.

Petty Testifies—Other National officers at the court hearing were Frank Orman, vice-president, and W.M. Petty, chief accountant.

Petty testified that the show had lost an average of about \$2,000 per day from the opening in Deming, N.M. until the closing at Burbank, Los Angeles, usually a good stand for the show, was a heavy loser, Petty said. The 1956 gross for 12 days in Los Angeles was about the same as 1955, the auditor testified.

Beatty, Orman, and Petty arrived in Macon Sunday, Beatty flying in from Sarasota and Petty flying in from

The midway and big top of the reopened Clyde Beatty Circus are shown on the lot in Brownwood, Texas on September 9, 1956. All photos are by the author unless otherwise credited.

winter quarters at Deming. Orman drove from his home in Fort Lauderdale, Fla. Beatty revealed that he had been offered several attractive bookings for late summer and fall for his wild animal act but he had withheld commitments until he exhausted all efforts toward reorganizing the circus. No definite plans or action had been taken at the time of the bankruptcy hearing.

Durward Mercer, Macon attorney, was named trustee for the National corporation and he is to dispose of the office machines and advertising matter it owns.

Beatty, Concello and McClosky stayed in Macon thru Wednesday (13) for further discussions but nothing had come of these talks by Friday (15).

Between the June 16, 1956 *Billboard* article and a later article on the Beatty show on July 21, 1956, very little news surfaced on the Beatty show. It was kind of like the eternal triangle except that Beatty probably preferred keeping his show to the proposals or advances Concello and McClosky might have made during this period. However, if Beatty was too cool, both suitors might decide they could do without him.

Again, an historian with legal training could explain the situation better, but until that occurs, the following speculations are offered. Beatty owed both Concello and McClosky. He could just wait and the first time a payment is missed, Concello or McClosky could start foreclosure to gain the show. However, at that time the other lender could step in and claim his interest as a lender to this circus. A forced sale could follow with neither McClosky or Concello being the high bidder. A second alternative is for either Concello or McClosky to give Beatty money to pay off the other and turn the show over to the one putting up the money. Of course, Beatty would receive a fee for his cooperation. Another alternative is for the lenders, Concello and McClosky to come to terms for one to buy up the other's mortgage. The buyer could then wait to foreclose on Beatty.

This last alternative would be attractive if Beatty wanted too large a fee for assisting one of the lenders. Thus, there were a lot of opportunities for dealing in the period between June 16, 1956 and July 21, 1956. In the Sept.-Oct. 1972 *White Tops*, William "Bill" Elbirn wrote an article on Floyd King. In the article he said a little hanky panky apparently took place among the rival buyers without going into details. I would guess the hanky panky was nothing more than rival businessmen trying for the best deal.

An Austin, Texas lawyer once described a way to break the stalemate between Concello and McClosky. Whether this method was used or not, it might be interesting enough to mention. Human nature causes men to react inconsistently. For example, a discussion of Concello selling his interest to McClosky would find Concello setting a high price and McClosky setting a low price. A discussion of McClosky selling his interest to Concello would find McClosky setting a high price and Concello setting a low price. An Austin lawyer proposes a coin flip—heads, I sell to you and tails I buy from you. Since it could go either way, one would be more prone to set a fair price. After all, if one set the price too high, he may have to buy, and if he set the price too low, he may have to sell. Whether Concello and McClosky used the above mentioned or not, the clock was rapidly running out, and they had to settle soon.

Several factors influenced the men towards a quick settlement. First, there was still enough time to return the show to the road and salvage the season. Second, with the Ringling-Barnum circus returned to quarters, there would be little opposition to America's last tented railroad circus. Third, with the Ringling closing, great amounts of publicity created a desire in people for a tented railroad circus. Finally, with the Ringling, King and earlier Beatty closings, the supply of performers and circus bosses far exceeded demands. Excellent personnel could be obtained at wages favorable to the circus. Neither Concello nor McClosky could let the opportunities pass, so they were under pressure to come to an agreement.

Announcement of an agreement came in the July 21, 1956 issue of the *Billboard*. The McClosky group picked up the \$50,000 mortgage from Concello and obtained control of the show. William Elbirn, in his *The White Tops* article mentioned a \$50,000 purchase price. Naturally Concello would get the \$50,000 back that he had loaned the show. However, since there was a possibility Concello could get the entire show, it is probable he received an additional fee from the McClosky group to let them pick up his

mortgage. On the other hand, the group could have given Beatty \$50,000 to pay Concello plus a fee. Only a few know the complete details. However, one thing was sure, the Clyde Beatty circus had new life and would soon be on the road as America's only tented railroad circus.

As soon as the McClosky group became owners of the Clyde Beatty circus, many things concerning the show's future were revealed. First, the show would open August 30 under McClosky and Kernan management. David Blanchfield who was responsible for trucks and tractors on the Ringling-Barnum circus would have the same duties on the Beatty show. Count Nicholas, a former Ringling equestrian director would also be on the show. Robert Reynolds, another Ringling employee during previous years would be superintendent. Concello had no part of the show. Clyde Beatty was not able to salvage even a small partial ownership, but he was just another performer (a manner of speaking since Beatty will never be remembered as "just another performer") working under contract. The deal was reported completed Friday, July 13th. If Friday the 13th is unlucky, it is not unlucky for McClosky and Kernan.

The July 21, 1956 issue of the *Billboard* noted that Concello had filed suit at Deming, earlier, to foreclose on the mortgage he held against the show. However, no details were given concerning this interesting report. The same issue had ads for all types of working men, bosses, and performers to join the Clyde Beatty circus.

The next report about the circus was that Floyd King was named general agent. It was stated that King was with the Beatty show within two days after Ringling had closed.

A story was also circulated that the show had considered going out on ten cars before Ringling closed, and after Ringling closed it was decided to stay with a 15 car show. The next story that circulated was that the show would add five cars.

Meanwhile, more people were joining the show. Artie Walsh became 24 hour man. George Werner, former Ringling boss canvas man, joined. It was reported the Gustino Loyal Troupe of bareback riders would join. Four contracting agents, Hank Carlisle, Charles Sledman, Ted Young, and R.E. Miller, Jr. were on the road by August 4th setting a route. By August 18th, they had the Texas route contracted.

Other personnel additions were announced. Eddie Howe, former press agent for Ringling, Cole, and Beatty would take charge of the Beatty press work. Otis Leslie would be trainmaster. Richard Shipley would be boss elephant man. Tommy Clarke would



The big top is pictured from the backyard, showing the three large cages holding the Clyde Beatty wild animal act.

have props. Harry L. Jones would have the sideshow. Jimmy Hammiter would be in charge of side show canvas and sell tickets.

As dress rehearsals scheduled for August 28 drew near, more people joined the show. Howard Y. Bary was added to the press department. Mrs. Edna Antes moved into the ticket wagon to become ticket auditor. She would become one of the best known of the Clyde Beatty staff, and would set a record for time spent in one circus wagon. William Petty was treasurer. Frank Orman was legal adjutor. Karl Knudsen was the second 24 hour man added to the staff. Vic Robbins was signed to lead the band. Roland Butler was retained as a publicity consultant and did the artwork for newspaper ads.

The reorganized Clyde Beatty Circus was getting set to roll for a second 1956 tour that was to be most successful.

Following the publication of the first installment in the last issue of the *Bandwagon* some interesting comments and corrections have been received from CHS member Ed Lester, dean of circus and carnival flat car loaders. He comments as follows. "There is no question that one could see a different train loading order than the one listed in the first article. All shows varied the list. It took as long to load the nine Beatty flats as it did the forty-seven Ringling-Barnum flats because of the waits for wagons to arrive at the runs. The outline under the six small menagerie cages stated

The nine loaded flat cars of the 1956 Clyde Beatty Circus train are shown in Brownwood, Texas.



that they were loaded crosswise on the flat, this was not the case. They were loaded two side by side (as shown in the photo with this installment.)

"The run flats were #56 and #59. The train loaded in the order of flats #51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58 and 59. The unloading was however #56, 57, 58, 59, 52, 53, 54, 55 and 51. The trick was to take the #51, with the small cages, and set it aside. Then come in and take #52, 53, 54 and 55 and set them ahead of 51 and then finally set #56, 57, 58 and 59 ahead of the second group. This allowed the "last loaded" but "first used" equipment like the cobbhouse, trucks, tractors, big top and electrical department to get to the lot as soon as the show arrived in town.

"The reason flat #51 was set aside for later unloading was that the small cages were a pain to unload, as their 4 ft. width required that one of the runs be moved closer to the other or that a plank be used as a second run. The plates between flats would have to also be moved closer together if the small cages were pulled over more than one flat. Holding #51 until last left all of the changing and shoving until the last.

"Wagon #99 listed as a stringer wagon in the first installment, was as suggested a fifth seat wagon. This was a different design from #51, 52, 93 and 94. The bull tubs were piled on top of #99. Seat wagon #99 was placed in the round end of the big top at the opposite end to the marquee entrance, it was called the stringer wagon by the circus crew as it carried the stringers inside. The other seat wagons ended up being hollow in traveling order and carried the grandstand chairs.

"The seat wagons had ex-US Army type hookups with a built in safety latch. These frequently stuck and had to be pounded to get them open."



Wagon No. 31 the cookhouse range wagon was part of the original Sparks 1947 group. The undergear and inside construction is typical of the Lewis Diesel design.

The First Week

Thursday, August 30, Las Cruces, N.M.; Friday 31, Albuquerque, N.M.; Saturday, September 1, Albuquerque, N.M.

The public hunger for a tented railroad circus was evident at the very first stand. The Las Cruces Junior Chamber of Commerce worked hard in advance of the show and brought out two capacity houses. The long jump prevented a matinee at Albuquerque on August 31, but the show had had a turnaway at night. The following day saw a turnaway matinee with an extra show at 5 p.m. playing to 1,000. The night show was also a turnaway. The first week of three days saw two capacity houses and two turnaways and one extra show.

The Second Week

Sunday, September 2, Fort Sumner, N.M. (Mat. only); Monday, 3, Clovis, N.M.; Tuesday, 4, Amarillo, TX; Wednesday, 5, Plainview, TX; Thursday, 6, Lubbock, TX; Friday, 7, Sweetwater, TX; Saturday, 8, San Angelo, TX.

The matinee at Fort Sumner started at 4 p.m. after a 200 mile jump. Clovis gave a good afternoon and night house. Amarillo had a light afternoon house, but a near full night show caused the day to be termed good. Plainview had a dust storm between shows, but the 1/4 afternoon was followed by a good 3/4 night show. Lubbock was called a big day by a trade paper that reported a 1/4 matinee and a 3/4 night house.

The show was short of help, but it had quality people even if it did lack quantity. Pete Marsh was boss usher. Bill Lewis had downtown sales. Dave Murphy was boss of tickets with Frank Perez and Mike Bergen. Dee Miller was in the white wagon. Herbie Weber was gilly driver in addition to being a very fine performer on the tightwire. Francis Kitzman had the billing brigade

which was the last real old time billing brigade. Texas has never seen as much paper since 1956. Raymon Alleguar was later listed in a trade paper as leading the band with no mention about an earlier announcement that Vic Robbins would lead the band.

At the end of the second week, the show loaded at San Angelo on Saturday night and headed for Brownwood where it would play on a lot outside of the city limits due to a Sunday blue law.

CIRCUS DAY AT BROWNWOOD, TEXAS

Leland Antes and I had been so absorbed in our conversation we were hardly aware of finishing breakfast, paying the cashier, getting in the car and driving to the lot, on the morning of September 8, 1956.

On the way to the lot we passed the rail yards and saw the train partially unloaded. As we reached the edge of town, we saw men leading stock down the side of the highway. I stopped the car and took a picture of a man leading two camels. I started the car and drove a bit farther till I reached the lot just outside the city limits. I grabbed my camera as soon as I had parked the car



Big top canvas wagon #90 was equipped with a hoist, shown here on the left side of the wagon. Pfening collection.

and started onto the lot to record my last visit to a tented railroad circus.

The first department in place was the cook house. I was glad I had eaten because the most enticing aroma was coming from the cook house range wagon. The cook was frying bacon. To the side was the dining tent with tables already set up and covered with checkered table cloths. At the end of the tent was parked a second dining department wagon.

A quick glance around the lot revealed the big top crew already active. I hurried over to get a closer look. The men were beginning to unload the first center pole. A canvas wagon close to the center pole wagon was also being unloaded. An elephant pulled a canvas bundle out of the wagon.

All around the lot, elephants were busy towing wagons into place for unloading. Near the front of the lot, the sideshow wagon was being unloaded after being pulled into place by an elephant. After each big top center pole was unloaded, a large elephant would pull the pole wagon forward until it was in place for unloading another center pole. The show left the tractors to unload the train and used elephants to move wagons about the lot.

The big top was raised in short order. In no time at all the center poles had been raised and the canvas spread and laced. Next, a crew moved around the perimeter of the tent placing the side poles. Elephants began to pull the peaks to allow setting of the quarter poles. One elephant pulled a quarter pole so strongly that a large tear appeared in the canvas. Soon, the tent was in the air. I realized that while I was watching the big top go up, the side show tent had also been erected. Both tents were in place. About this time, the train tractor arrived pulling six cross cages signaling that the last flat car at the rail yards had been unloaded.

It was time for people to begin arriving for the performance. The midway

World's Greatest Trained Wild Animal Show					
1956		No. 1		OFFICIAL ROUTE	
Allow Enough Time To Reach Points Named Before Date Given					
DATE	TOWN	STATE	R. R.	MILES	
FIRST WEEK					
Aug. 30	Las Cruces	N. M.	AT&SF	80	
Aug. 31	Albuquerque	N. M.	AT&SF	30	
Sept. 1	Fort Sumner (Mat.)			211	
SECOND WEEK					
Sept. 3	Clovis	N. M.	AT&SF	60	
4	Amarillo	Tex.		102	
5	Plainview			74	
6	Lubbock			111	
7	Sweetwater			72	
8	San Angelo			126	
THIRD WEEK					
Sept. 10	Lubbock	Tex.	AT&SF	76	
11	Ft. Worth			86	
12	Ft. Worth			129	
13	Dallas			31	
to 14					
VICTOR ROBBINS, Mail Agent				TOTAL	1201

had been prepared for the arrival of the crowds. To the left side was the side show with a long banner line advertising its wonders. On the right were concessions and a trailer pit show. In the center of the midway were the red ticket wagon and white ticket wagon parked side by side. Several concessions stands were set up in the center of the midway. At the end of the midway was the marquee.

In the big top, there was continuous activity as one great act after another entertained the afternoon audience. While photographing the back yard, I missed the performance, but later I would read about the performance in an article in the October 27, 1956 issue of the *Billboard*. The portion of the article dealing with the performance is reproduced here.

"Performance Reviewed—The performance is set off by good announcing on the part of Count Nicholas and a fine, hard working circus band directed by Raymond Aguilar, with 10 men who really cut it.

"At the ... afternoon show the spec was brightly costumed and included numerous girls, along with elephants, camels, llamas, rasin backs and other features.

"Wardrobe is nice throughout the show.

"Four lady principal acts work side rings for good 'picture' effect and personnel is from the Loyal-Repenski Family Act.

"Clyde Beatty has the third spot. He works four tigers and 10 lions in the big center arena. There are barrel rolls, spinning, rollovers, fence jumping and plenty of snarling and action. Nine lions are bunched together for a good bit. And let there be no question that Beatty works a good act hard, getting top results in an action-packed routine.

"Each side ring then has a combination of one big elephant and two ponies for pleasing routines that include a plank walk by the bulls.

"Fifth display has Chata Escalante (Weber) on the loop-the-loop for a good routine, and Miss Canestrelli on the single trapeze making a big hit. Four ladders and eight webs are used in an aerial ballet number. Among those who work ballet are Audrey Smith, Jackie Tolliver, Ursala Muller and Maxsmilliana Becker, as well as others who are members of different acts.

"The Canestrelli Trio was held to two people here (Memphis, Tenn.) by an illness. The pair made a good appearance with ladder balancing and foot perch work. Cowboy Reb Russell appears for a concert announcement made by Arthur Hoffman. A wrestling match was being considered for adding.

"Strong Wire Display—A wire walking display is outstanding. Lolita

Perez performs a fine single act at one end and makes a good appearance. The Herbert Webers (2) are in the other end ring and have flash and finish that please. In the center is Antolina Segora, pretty and polished, who has the big top all to herself as she throws a perfect back somersault to the feet in a free and easy manner that wins applause.

Clowns follow and they include Jimmy Armstrong, Eddie Dullum, Lou Nagy, Bill Brickle, Dennis Stevens, Merlin Hinkle, Balila, Cueto and Cha Cha Morales. Cueto walks on stilts in the spec.

"The Carmenas are a duo which performs good hand and head balancing, a strong head-to-head bit and then a stand-out stunt in which the girl spins rapidly while the man balances her head-to-head.

"Clowns come in and then the Four Segoras in speedy teeter board work, Risley and two and three high mounts.

"Fanfare heralds the Loyal-Repenski Family, which enters ceremoniously, seven people and six horses. They perform a routine of pyramid, three-up, jockey riding by two members, six fork-ups to one horse and more. Then comes a somersault. At this performance, Zefta Loyal turned backwards from one horse to another. Justino Loyal clowning the act and a speedy wind-up sets it off. Three members of the act take turns in the somersaulting spot, one performing it at each performance.

"Another concert announcement clears the decks for the Great (Herbie) Weber's foot slide. His studied walk-up wins one of the strongest displays of applause yet and the slide brings more clapping from the seats. Clowns come in while rigging work is completed.

"The Sabre Jets, like many of the other acts on the program, are graduates of the short-lived Ringling tour of this year. In this performance they worked a pirouette, layout, double cutaway to a stick, birds nest and a passing leap. Effect is good and there are more feats in their repertoire.

"The big elephant display is super-

The Beatty show moved on 15 cars, the four sleepers shown here, two stock cars and nine flats. This Eddie Jackson photo was taken during the Dallas date.



vised by Dick Shipley, elephant superintendent, and Colleen Alpaugh is among those working the bulls. There are three big ones in each side ring and three small ones in the center. For much of this display their routines are identical and concurrent. They climax with a walking long mount that closes the show after an hour and a half."

The night performance was over, and the extremely high emotions of the day begin to slightly taper off. I rounded the front of the big top in time to see the last poles being loaded before the side show wagon would leave the lot. The marquee and side show and midway had been dismantled and packed into wagons, some of which had already left the lot. People were pouring out of the big top.

I took a few more pictures, exposing the last of my film. Leland and I took one last look at the show and walked to the car. It was time to go home.

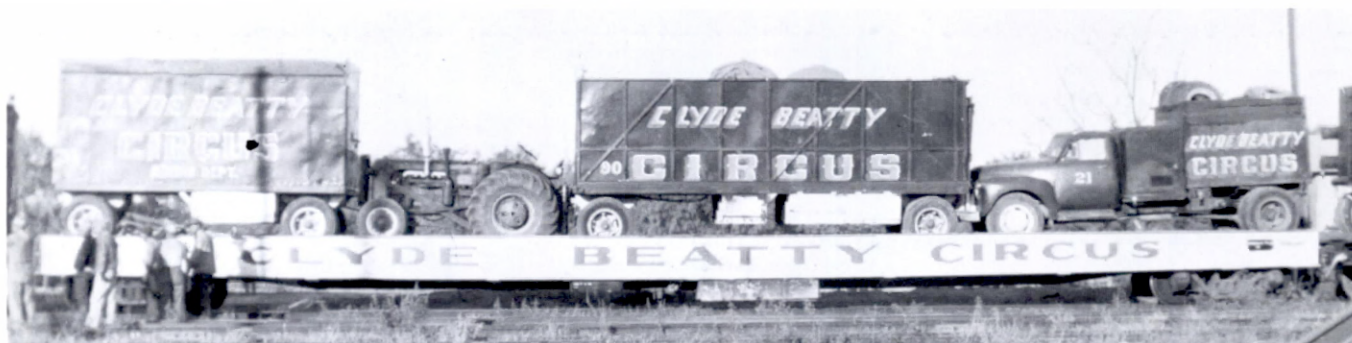
I started the car, maneuvered it onto the highway and headed for home. The route took us back through town past the rail yards. Little did we realize we would never see that circus train again.

As we got out on the highway, we began to talk to pass the time. Our conversation turned to speculation about the future of the Clyde Beatty Circus. Gradually, it seemed as if it was the end of the season and we were looking backward at the show. It was beginning its third week.

The Third Week

Sunday, September 9, Brownwood, TX; Monday, 10, Lampasas, TX; Tuesday, 11, Temple, TX; Wednesday, 12, Waco, TX; Thursday, 13, Dallas, TX; Friday, 14, Dallas, TX; Saturday, 15, Dallas, TX.

The Brownwood matinee on Sunday produced a mixed report. The headline in a trade paper read "Brownwood Packs Beatty's Big Top," but the story stated the show drew a three-quarter house. About this time the schools opened and began cutting into the afternoon performance at each town. Following Brownwood, the show played Lampasas and Temple. The town played after Temple was not reported, but it is suspected the show might have played Waco. Ringling



often played Dallas or Fort Worth and then Waco, Austin and San Antonio. Therefore, Waco is a good guess because this is the point where Beatty began to pick up the Ringling route without any opposition whatsoever. The Beatty show was now serving up Big Bertha, the show created by the famous brothers, Barnum, and James Bailey, a large dish of humble pie.

Beatty made Dallas before the state fair of Texas was scheduled to begin. The show had light houses on Thursday and for the Friday matinee. The show had a near capacity Friday night even though high school football is very popular on Friday night in Texas. Saturday was also a big day for the show. It was a good week.

The Fourth Week

Sunday, September 16, Dallas, TX; Monday, 17, Corsicana, TX; Tuesday, 18, Bryan, TX; Wednesday, 19, Austin, TX; Thursday, 20, San Antonio, TX; Friday, 21, San Antonio, TX; Saturday 22, Corpus Christi, TX.

The show finished out Dallas on Sunday with a good day. Matinee was a $\frac{3}{4}$ full house. Night saw a $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{2}{3}$ house which most showmen consider very good for Sunday night. Monday was light in the afternoon and near full at night. The Corsicana date on Monday saw the blues being strawed and only about 250 unsold reserves.

There were no Aggie jokes told on Tuesday, September 18, 1956 when the show moved to Bryan, Texas to play near Texas A&M University. This was the first major show in ten years. A large crowd watched the train unload. Both shows were capacity with more turned away from the night show.

The next date was Austin, home of

The Beatty train used a different loading order on the second 1956 tour. The flats were loaded in the following order in Brownwood. Flat #52 carried the cookhouse, #31; a tractor, big top canvas, #90; and water wagon truck, #21.

Texas University, traditional rivals of Texas A&M in every type of competition. This week, the competition seemed to be who could turn out the largest attendance for a circus. Austin won with a three show day. When the sponsor had sold \$10,000 worth of tickets long before circus day, an extra show was scheduled. A late arrival caused a two hour delay for the matinee, but it was still a full house. Two shows at night saw a capacity for the first night show and a half house for the night owl performance. About this time it was announced Ora Parks would join in Houston to do press work. Austin, like all other towns, was a poster collector's paradise.

The show arrived late in San Antonio due to the extra show in Austin. It began a two day stand on Thursday. The late matinee was light, but Thursday night the tent was nearly full. The show had a $\frac{3}{4}$ full tent Friday afternoon and a full tent at night. This was in spite of popular Friday night football, which Texans take too, too seriously, and the Grand Ole Opry at a downtown auditorium.

The state was going wild over the Clyde Beatty Circus. It was as if people not only realized railroad circuses would not last forever, but they also realized maybe even Clyde Beatty was

Flat #53 carried the big top pole wagon, #91; a tractor, the train light plant and crane truck, #22.

mortal and would also be gone one day. Texans were not going to miss a chance to see both.

The circus finished the fourth week on the first day of a two day stand at Corpus Christi. The train pulled into the yards at 8:30 a.m. after a 149 mile jump. A five mile lot haul caused the show to schedule the matinee at 4 p.m. The show had two full houses on Saturday.

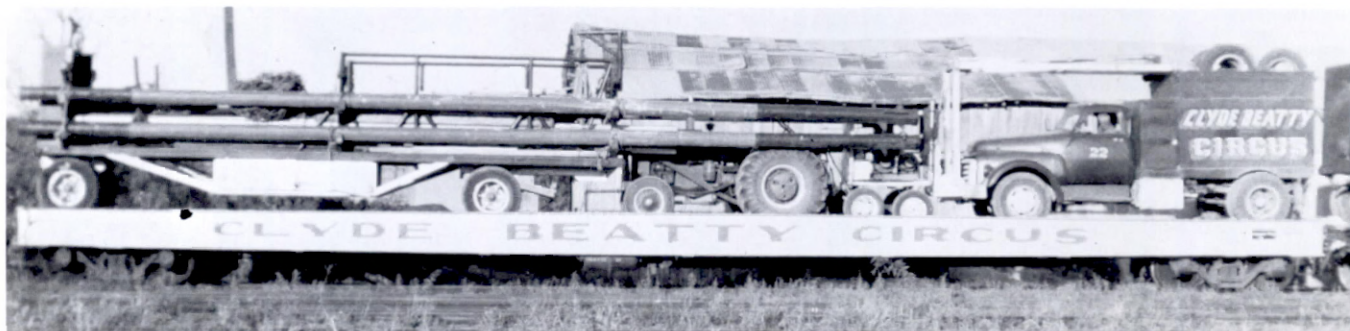
The Fifth Week

Sunday, September 23, Corpus Christi, TX; Monday, 24, Victoria, TX; Tuesday, 25, Bay City, TX; Wednesday, 26, Freeport, TX; Thursday, 27, Galveston, TX; Friday, 28, Houston, TX; Saturday, 29, Houston, TX.



The six large elephants on the show are pictured in front of one of the four sleepers. Pfening collection.

The week began with the final day of the Corpus stand producing two full houses on a Sunday. There were four





full houses in two days at Corpus causing the show to reluctantly leave Corpus for Victoria on Monday and Bay City on Tuesday. The show termed Victoria and Bay City satisfactory. Then came Freeport on Wednesday, September 26, 1956. It was reported Missouri Pacific railroad hesitated before agreeing to haul the show. A big advance caused the show to schedule three performances at 3, 5, and 8 p.m. All three shows were reported sellouts. Evidently, performer's health ruled out a 10 p.m. show. Galveston followed with a 2/3 afternoon and near full night performance. One of the wildest rumors was that the show was adding a box car to haul the cash.

The last two days of the week were for the first two days of a three day Houston stand. The show did well in spite of Friday night high school football, Saturday college football and Ice Capades being in town. Friday was a 1/4 afternoon and 3/4 to near full night. Saturday was stronger with a 3/4 afternoon and near full tent for the night show. It was a week that circus owners dream about.

The Sixth Week

Sunday, September 30, Houston, TX; Monday, October 1, Beaumont, TX; Tuesday, 2, Port Arthur, TX; Wednesday, 3, Orange, TX; Thursday, 4, Layfayette, LA; Friday, 5, New Iberia, LA; Saturday, 6, Alexandria, LA.

Business became a bit more ordinary as the show moved out of Texas. However there were some big days still left on the route. At New Iberia, LA the report said the show had two three-quarters houses.

The Seventh Week

Flat #51 carried the light plant, #42; stake driver truck, #20; jack wagon, #96; and the prop wagon, #85.

Sunday, October 7, Opelousas, LA; Monday, 8, Baton Rouge, LA; Tuesday, 9, Baton Rouge, LA; Wednesday, 10, Vicksburg, MI; Thursday, 11, Yazoo City, MI; Friday, 12, Greenwood, MI; Saturday, 13, Greenville, MI.

Business was good the seventh week of the Fall tour although it was not as outstanding as in Texas. The show began strong the first day of the week with a straw for the matinee only at Opelousas, LA. This is called Cajun Country. The show finished the week with a string of one-quarter and three-quarter houses at Yazoo City, Greenwood, and Greenville.

The show was feeling a little Cristiani Brothers Circus opposition. This new large truck circus beat Beatty into Greenwood and Greenville. While Beatty was in Mississippi, Cristiani was in Florida playing several future Beatty dates.

One could remember a time when Floyd King and the Cristiani family had the King-Cristiani Circus. They split several years earlier. Now King was routing the Beatty show. Previously, Ringling took the big cities and King Brothers Circus took the smaller towns in the south during the Fall. Both shows were off the road. Now Floyd King and the Cristianis, former King-Cristiani personnel, were routing two different shows through the south. The Cristianis evidently

Flat #59 carried the sideshow wagon, #46; a seat wagon, a tractor, and light department wagon, #43. This was an unloading run flat.

learned well from King because they were getting there "firstest with the mostest." It was as though Floyd King was fighting his own self.

The Eighth Week

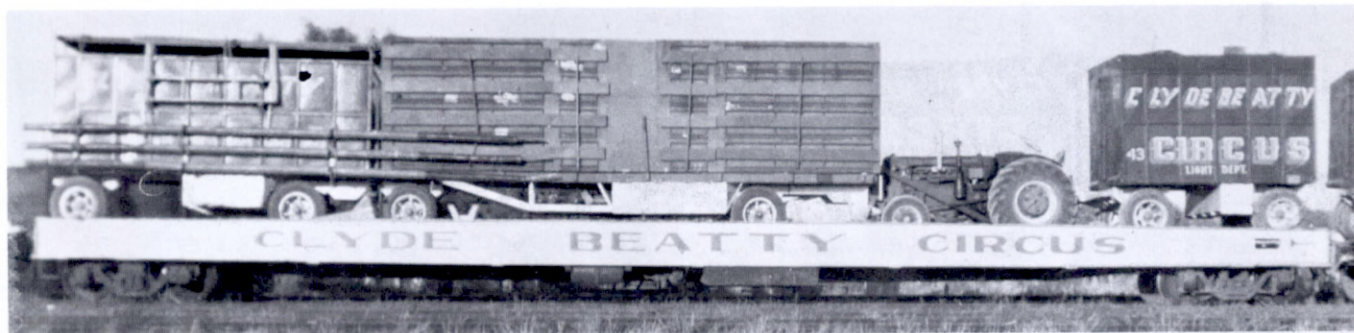
Sunday, October 14, Not reported in *Billboard*; Monday, 15, Memphis, TN; Tuesday, 16, Jackson, TN; Wednesday, 17, Paducah, KY; Thursday, 18, Hopkinsville, Ky; Friday, 19, Nashville, TN; Saturday 20, Shelbyville, TN.

The Ninth Week

Sunday, October 21, Not reported in *Billboard*; Monday, 22, Chattanooga, TN; Tuesday, 23, Knoxville, TN; Wednesday, 24, Asheville, NC; Thursday, 25, Hickory, NC; Friday, 26, Gastonia, NC; Saturday, 27, Greenville, SC.

The ninth week saw the first bad weather of the fall tour. Rain occurred at Chattanooga and caused the show difficulty in getting off the lot. The show was late getting the matinee started at Knoxville the next day which was still termed a half house. Night brought a near full tent. Even in Chattanooga the day before in rain, the show had a 60% afternoon and 75% night attendance.

It was reported every stand, except Gastonia, NC, brought good business this last week of October. Hickory, NC had a 1/2 house for the matinee which some said was hurt by a late arrival. The night was a 3/4 house. Even Gastonia had a three-quarter night attendance, but there was only a handful at the matinee. Gastonia was termed the worst single day attendance since leaving Deming. Next day at Greenville, the show had a three-quarter





house and near full house for the two performances. The show moved to Atlanta, GA.

The Tenth Week

Sunday, October 28, Off; Monday, 29, Atlanta, GA; Tuesday, 30, Atlanta, GA; Wednesday, 31, Columbus, GA; Thursday, November 1, Albany, GA; Friday, 2, Valdosta, GA; Saturday, 3, Jacksonville, FL.

The show began the week by playing Atlanta, GA. One report stated "Ring of Fear" a movie made using the Beatty show played the local drive-in movies before the circus arrived. When the show arrived Sunday morning, another report had "thousands" at the yards to watch the train unload and at the lot to watch the big top go up.

The show set up in a suburb—East Point. One report, not originating with the circus, was the show could not get a license from Atlanta proper because of Shrine opposition. The Hamid-Morton show was scheduled for Nov. 5-11. However, another report said newspapers were favorable to the show with one paper being "enthusiastic and boosted the show as a traditional type show."

Business was good at Atlanta. Monday saw the seats half filled in the afternoon and a sellout at night. There was not a specific report for Tuesday, but a report of a 20,000 ticket advance indicated good business for Tuesday.

The show left Atlanta and made a 126 mile run to Columbus. A 10:30 a.m. arrival caused the matinee to be set at 4:15 p.m. The report said the stand was a break even. This tells something about economics of a circus. The show had a one-third matinee and one-half night show attendance figure. Since a

Flat #55 carried the cookhouse range wagon, #30; the restroom wagon, #98; concessions, #41; and the white ticket wagon, #45.

truck show is supposed to have smaller transportation costs, one suspects a successful truck show should break even on a pair of one-third houses each day and start to make money when attendance exceeds these levels.

Another advantage for a truck show was noted at the Columbus date. The show was notified of the possibility of a strike by four different rail unions. The railroad was taking steps to obtain an injunction to prevent interruption of service. The strike was called at 10 p.m. and train crews left work. The show train loaded on schedule and then began to wait. The railroad finally got the injunction and train crews returned to their jobs. The show train pulled out of the yards at 6 a.m. bound for Albany, GA.

The Eleventh Week

Sunday, November 4, Jacksonville, FL; Monday, 5, St. Augustine, FL; Tuesday, 6, Daytona Beach, FL; Wednesday, 7, Melbourne, FL; Thursday, 8, Hollywood, FL; Friday, 9, Miami, FL; Saturday 10, Miami, FL.

The eleventh week found Floyd King routing the show in behind Cristiani on several dates. On October 12, Cristiani played Daytona Beach to the best advance ever given a circus at that location according to a show representative. Cristiani played Melbourne on

Flat #56 carried the trunk wagon, #82; bible wagon, #40; bible wagon, #80; and a seat wagon. This was also an unloading run flat.

October 18 and drew two three-quarter houses.

ATLANTA AT EAST POINT
Harrison Rd. and Williamham Dr.
2 BIG DAYS - AFT. & NITE
MON., OCT. 29 | TUE., OCT. 30
Auspices Tri-City Optimist Club



3 & 8 p. m. Clyde Beatty in Person
Children 75c; Adults \$1.35 inc. F. T.
Gen. Adm. and Res. Seat Tickets
on Sale Circus Days at
Bond's Clothes, 95-99 Peachtree
Also at Circus Grounds

This newspaper ad was used for the Atlanta, GA date. This same style ad had been used by the Beatty show for a number of years. Joe Bradbury collection.





The Twelfth Week

Sunday, November 11, Miami, FL; Monday, 12, West Palm Beach, FL; Tuesday, 13, Winter Haven, FL; Wednesday, 14, Orlando, FL; Thursday, 15, Ocala, FL; Friday, 16, Lakeland, FL; Saturday, 17, Clearwater, FL.

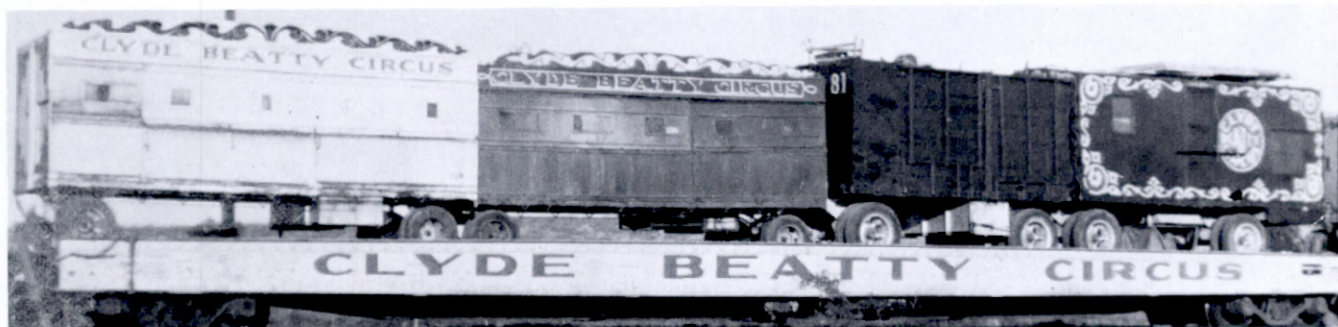
Business was mixed during the twelfth week. Miami was big on Sunday and the entire Miami run was termed satisfactory. Winter Haven had a straw house in the afternoon and light business at night. A light day at Orlando was followed by Ocala with

Flat #54 carried three of the five 24 ft. long folding seat wagons.

FL; Tuesday, 20, Sarasota, FL; Wednesday, 21, Closed. Entered Deland quarters.

The show had a strong finish. On Sunday, St. Petersburg had a 13,000 ticket advance and supported three shows. Tampa had a big advance sale for a good day. Cristiani had two full houses at Tampa on October 20 with an extra show playing to 800, but there was plenty of business left for the Clyde Beatty Circus.

Ringling closing appeared for the night performance. It was fitting that America's last tented railroad circus give its final performance in Sarasota, FL. The clowns were never funnier. The performers were never more sincere. The band was never more spirited. The audience was never more appreciative. History reports Coup had begun the tented railroad circus and now McClosky, Kernan, and Collins were bringing it to a dignified end. It was a giant party and many who had contributed to the success of the tented railroad circus were in atten-



two good houses. The mixed business failed to indicate whether the next few days would give the show a strong closing or a weak closing.

Not many details were given on the Beatty show for the week. Miami was termed as light business on Friday and OK business on Saturday.

The Thirteenth Week

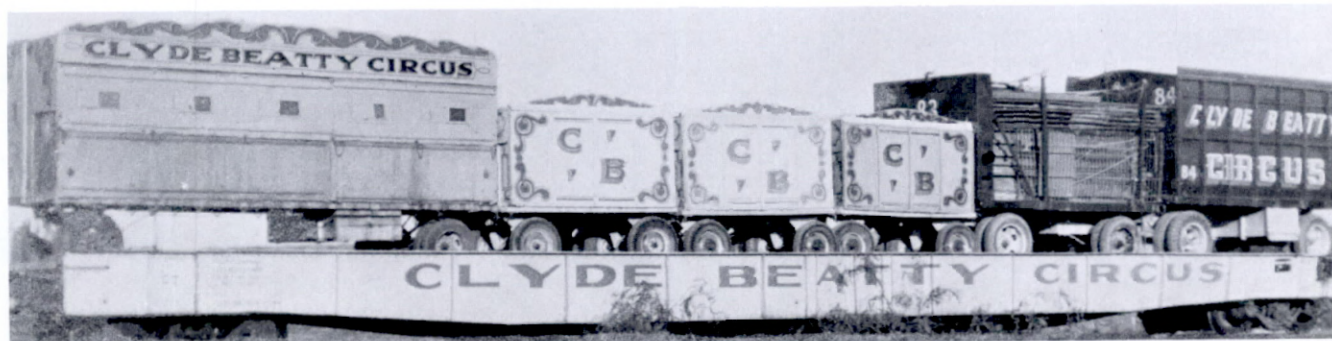
Sunday, November 18, St. Petersburg, FL; Monday, 19, Tampa,

Flat #58 carried cage #2; cage #3; the band and Beatty props, #81 and the red ticket wagon, #44.

Then came Sarasota. The time had come for an end to the history making tour of the Clyde Beatty Circus. Many former Ringling employees, who saw their hopes and dreams end with the

Flat #57, the last on the string carried cage #1; the six eight foot small cages loaded two abreast; steel arena wagon, #83; and wardrobe wagon, #84.

dance. All things must end, and the show had to close. The announcer strode to the center ring and asked the audience to rise. Every old timer in the audience knew what was coming, and few expected to be able to hold their emotions completely in check. The band began to play "Auld Lang Syne." The audience, which included many out-of-work RBB&B employees, began to sing. There was not a dry eye in the house. The circus world would never be the same again. The music ended. The show was over.





The Circus Moves By Rail

By Tom Parkinson and Charles Philip Fox
Pruett Publishing Company
Boulder, Colorado
10.25" x 8.25"; 352 pages; 400 photos;
\$35.00

Authors Parkinson and Fox are two of our most notable circus historians, and *The Circus Moves By Rail* represents their best effort to date. Thirty years earlier, Chappie Fox gave a preview of this book when he wrote the marvelously illustrated, but somewhat limited, *Circus Trains*, Kalmbach Publishing Co., Milwaukee, Wisconsin (1947). In the interim, the man from Oconomowoc has done much on the literary front to preserve and project circus lore. In 1952, he wrote *Circus Parades*, Century House, Watkins Glen, New York (1953), and at the end of that decade authored *A Ticket To The Circus, a Pictorial History of the Incredible Ringlings*, Superior Publishing Company, Seattle, Washington (1959). The next year, through the same publisher, came *A Pictorial History of Performing Horses* (1960). In 1978, Fox teamed up with veteran circus scribe F. Beverly Kelley, and put out a second book on street parades entitled *The Great Circus Street Parade in Pictures*, Dover Publications, Inc., New York (1978). More recently, he has produced *American Circus Posters in Full Color*.

For years, Tom Parkinson was Circus Editor of *The Billboard*. In addition, he has written many fine papers on circus history which have appeared in *Bandwagon* and *The White Tops*. In 1957, John and Alice Durant authored *Pictorial History of the American Circus*, A.S. Barnes and Company, New York. That book is particularly valuable because of an appendix, written by Parkinson, which gives thumbnail historical sketches of the principal American circuses.

In 1969, Fox and Parkinson collaborated to produce an outstanding book, *The Circus in America*, Country Beautiful, Waukesha, Wisconsin (1969). The present, *The Circus Moves By Rail*, is their second, impressive joint work. Both books are

characterized by heavy reliance on illustrations. While the 1969 book utilizes full color duplications of lithographs to review circus history, the new one does it through illustrations and photographs dealing with circus trains.

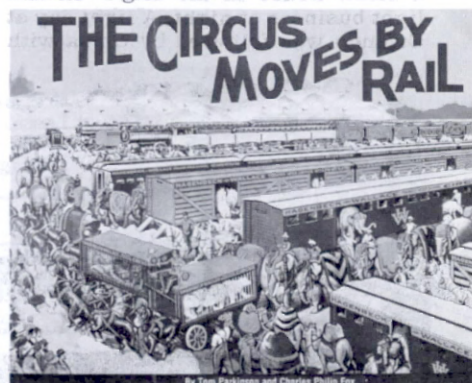
Among the more prominent of the numerous facets of circus fandom are acrobatics, drama, clowning, personalities, music, art, advertising, animals, travel and equipment. Presenting circus history along such generic lines is particularly appealing and, *The Circus Moves By Rail* is the best work of that type to date. Essentially, the book and its various chapters treat five different topics, to wit: (1) Lineal history (origin, growth, zenith, decline and rebirth); (2) Equipment (types, designs and sources); (3) Operations (legalities, planning, routing, logistics, loading orders, moves and coordination with railroads); (4) Noteworthy events (disasters, unusual moves and the like); and (5) Related species (carnivals, two-car outfit, ice shows, chautauquas, Uncle Tom's Cabin, medicine shows, whale exhibits and the Circus World Museum train).

Particularly outstanding are the following:

- Details about the first Barnum train and the progeny it spawned.
- Table showing the consists of 32 different circus trains on tour in 1911 said to be the record year for the number of railroad circuses.
- Description of legalities affecting circus train operations. The authors explore such subjects as the determination of rates, publishing of tariffs and assessing charges for circus train moves, the duty of railroads as common carriers to handle circus trains, and the cooperation, or lack of same, between circuses and rail carriers.
- Details of how, when and where Ringling-Barnum revived its circus train. Included here is a table showing year-by-year growth in the size and consist of the Ringling-Barnum train(s) since 1956. This will be an invaluable tool for years to come.
- Illustrated, detailed narrative of a 1977 movement of the Ringling-

Barnum Red Unit train through the Rocky Mountains from Salt Lake City to Denver, told by Chappie Fox from aboard the train.

- Excerpts from a file maintained by the New York, Ontario & Western Railway on the movement of circus trains. This shows the numerous operating details involved with the dispatch, positioning and interchange of circus trains.



The book is profusely illustrated with photographs, route cards, lithographs, agreements and tariffs from a wide variety of sources. While the \$35.00 price for the book seems high at first glance, it is truly a bargain when one realizes that to purchase each of its 400 photographs would require an expenditure of at least 75¢ per print or a total of \$300.00. The photo reproduction is on the lighter, non-contrasty side, as distinguished from dark pictures with heavy contrast. If a circus photograph is to represent other than perfect tone, your reviewer prefers it on the lighter side, as that generally shows more detail.

Alas, it seems that with every major undertaking there must be some drawbacks, and *The Circus Moves By Rail* is not without error. On page 378 et seq. we find the familiar loading order of the Ringling-Barnum train in 1932. Unfortunately, the description of the first section's cage cut omits two flat cars (nos. 106 and 107) and the eight wagons loaded thereon. For the correct listing, see: Potter, Gordon, "Ringling-Barnum Train Loading Order, 1932", *Bandwagon*, Vol. 3, No. 6, Nov.-Dec.,

1959, pp. 3 & 25. A number of photographs are misidentified, and there are errors in some of the descriptive captions. For example, on page 7 the caption describes Ringling-Barnum dining department range wagon no. 7 as a giraffe den. On page 61, there is a nice reproduction of a route card from the Gentry Bros. Circus, but there is no caption or other reference to show its year. A caption on page 113 says Ringling-Barnum purchased Thrall flat cars in 1949, but the preceding text (p. 98) indicates those cars were obtained in 1947, two years earlier. On page 117 is a fine Gene Baxter photograph showing a Northern Pacific steam engine pulling Ringling-Barnum elephant cars and flats. The caption states that the presence of the elephant cars makes it the second section. However, in 1939, '40 and '41, Ringling-Barnum had three elephant cars in the first section. On page 119, a photograph showing Hagenbeck-Wallace stock cars is labeled 1931. However, the picture shows that the cars are white with dark lettering, a color scheme which was not used until 1933. As is well known, the H-W stocks in 1931 were painted orange (dark) with white lettering. On page 217, a Ringling-Barnum loading scene is labeled 1950. Yet, in the background one sees the old, dark-painted (red) passenger cars which, according to the preceding text (p. 131) were not used after 1947. Hence, the photograph on page 217 must have been taken before 1950. In fairness, these errors are minor in light of the overall accomplishment.

The Circus Moves By Rail ranks near the top among circus books published to date.

—Richard J. Reynolds

Annals of the American Circus 1793-1829 by Stuart Thayer, 241 pp., Ann Arbor, Michigan: Privately printed, 1976.

Stuart Thayer has done something exciting. After an astonishing amount of research he has penetrated the dark mists of the past to produce no less than an interpretive history of the American circus from its inception until 1829. The result is, in our little corner of the world at least, a tour de force.

Only a handful of other circus historians approach Thayer's ability to combine mastery of the sources (he visited no less than 59 archives in the course of his work) with a keen analytical sense that divulges not only reams of new information, but draws from it generalizations, contrasts and similarities. In the writing of circus history solid interpretation of this sort is as rare as a triple somersault.

The interpretive passages carry the book. These three and four paragraph asides, interspersed throughout his

chronological narrative, touch upon topics rarely scrutinized in any period of circus history, let alone the early period for which the raw data was previously missing. The economics of early shows, benefit performances, the configuration of early circus buildings and many other facets of early circus life are thoroughly analyzed. Like so much of the book, these topics point the way for others to delve more deeply.

CIRCUS.



Mr. BLANCHARD,

RESPECTFULLY informs the inhabitants of Salem and vicinity that he has opened a CIRCUS, in the rear of Maj. Barton's Hotel where he will have a performance every evening in the week (Saturday and Sunday excepted) consisting of HORSEMANSHIP, TIGHT ROPE and WIRE DANCING, VAULTING, etc. to commence THIS EVENING.

Particulars in Bills.

Tickets—Boxes 50 cents; Pit 25, at the Hotel. Doors open at 7—performance to commence at half past 7. Oct 27.

**SALEM, (MASSACHUSETTS)
OCTOBER 30, 1823.**

For example, Thayer discusses early circus audiences, not only showing their racial and ethnic composition but the attitudes they brought with them to the performance. In doing this, he has laid the groundwork for further development of this important subject. Future research may well undermine some or many of his conclusions as he climbs out on many limbs, but the significance of this volume's many speculations is not whether he is right or wrong, but that he has started us thinking about things we had not previously considered. His attempt to answer questions that no one else has asked is to me a major source of the book's richness.

Almost secondarily he completely re-writes the history of the circus before 1829. It supersedes all previous secondary works on early exhibitions by filling so many gaps in our knowledge, and by correcting so many errors of fact that a listing here would double the length of this review. Suffice it to say that this is our first

serious look at the beginnings of the American circus.

So much of the way we had perceived the circus in this period was the result of the chance survival of an ancient handbill, the preservation of an old newspaper ad, the publication of a memoir, or the success of a local history group in publicizing the deeds of their ancestors. The result of this randomness was that we were trying to put together a jigsaw puzzle with half the pieces missing. Thayer has found most of the missing pieces and then told us what the picture looks like.

And it looks a lot different than we thought it did. Before the 1820's the proprietors were all European born and the performances and buildings were little more than carbon copies of old world shows. We find that many of the things we associate with circuses had their origins much earlier than we suspected. The first parade, for example, was in 1797. With one important exception, the distinctive American circus had not been developed by the cut-off date of this account.

That exception was the use of the canvas tent which was soon to revolutionize the business. Thayer measures the implications of this important technological change, and adds a new name to our pantheon of circus greats. The first tent was not used in 1826 on Howes and Turner (as every school boy thought he knew), but in 1825 on a circus owned by the all but forgotten J. Purdy Brown of Somers, New York, whose accomplishments must rank him among the most creative showmen of all time. The author ranks the utilization of railroads 45 years later as the only comparable technological innovation.

Forgotten men and forgotten circuses dominate this volume. With the exception of John Bill Ricketts, James West and Victor Pepin, the men who laid the foundation of the American circus were unknown to us until this book's publication. Thayer has rehabilitated these obscure pioneers to their correct historical perspective.

It was these men who taught the business to a generation of enterprising Americans who ruled the industry from the 1830's until the 1870's. In the later chapters one sees giants like Levi North, Seth B. Howes, and Aron Turner starting their careers.

For the serious student this volume will be compelling reading, but for those not so interested or those without some knowledge of early shows some difficulty may arise. I suspect those who enjoy anecdotal history will find the author's writing style a bit too dry as Thayer cuts up very few jack-pots in this book. For those who wish to educate themselves on this period but fear the deep water, I would suggest reading the first few chapters in Chin-

dahl for background information before tackling this work.

While this volume is certainly one of the most important monographs ever written on the American circus, it is of course not flawless. I would have liked more on the parallel development of animal exhibitions, and on the European circuses of the same era. Nevertheless the book is certain to become the standard reference work on the period, and its limited printing assures it of becoming more valuable over time. I recommend it highly.

—Fred D. Pfening, III

The Life and Art of Andrew Ducrow and the Romantic Age of the English Circus

by A.H. Saxon

Archon Books, 511 pages, \$25.00 (cloth)

Here is the first biography ever written of the great Andrew Ducrow, and a finer piece of work on circus history we have not seen. Ducrow has, until now, been a shadowy figure to American circus historians, his fame, like that of Astley and Franconi before him, accepted, but the details unknown. No longer; Saxon presents him here fully rounded and an amazing hero he was.

No figure in the American circus approaches Ducrow, because of the different paths of development of the genre, here and in Europe. Until 1825 the American and European circuses grew on parallel lines, the American a slightly retarded version of the other,

dependent upon it for performers and novelties. Then, with the adoption of the canvas tent, the American circus went off on a bent of its own, visiting the rural centers and becoming, in a sense, frozen into its traditional form. The European circus, however, continued in the vein of the hippodrama, combining theatre and circus (as we now consider them) and presenting the great indoor extravaganzas at which Ducrow excelled in producing.

More than a producer, Ducrow was the consummate rider of his time and his abilities as impresario, designer, choreographer and tightrope artist made his troupe the foremost in Europe and thus in the world.

The list of hippodramas he caused to be produced at Astley's, and in provincial theatres as well, and the riding acts he introduced were all widely copied, probably the best testament to their value, but they were popular in his own arena for literally decades. His famous act, "The Courier of Saint Petersburg," is still occasionally seen in the ring and must be the most heavily reproduced, iconographically, of any act in history.

Ducrow's personal skill as a rider was such that there were those who couldn't believe what they saw him do. And his following among the public was immense. William Clarke said he was "at once beloved by boys and admired by men." We see such fame today, in people who add little to our lives, but to achieve this in the early

nineteenth century, when actors were low on the social scale and birthright high, is indeed unusual. Perhaps the greatest accolade paid Ducrow was by persons he once employed who, upon going to other arenas, advertised that they were "late of Mr. Ducrow's Company," or some such. They did this for years after they left him.

Professor Saxon has captured all this, Ducrow the artist, the entrepreneur, even the family man. In addition he has gone to the trouble to trace and expose the apocrypha which grew up around this astonishing career. The research that went into this volume was prodigious—one doubts that it could have been more thorough, short of having Ducrow himself to interview. The footnotes contain as much information as most volumes do in their entirety. There is history enough here to please the most hungry among us.

Above all this, above the fine picture of the Romantic Age of the English circus and an interesting biography and the proof of an extensive research task, is the prose. This is quite possibly the best written piece of circus history ever published, which we realize can be interpreted as doubtful praise. However, Saxon has established a mark with this volume and we can only hope that it will affect the work that follows. If it doesn't, we at least have this one, and a valuable thing to have it is.

—Stuart Thayer

THE CIRCUS COLLECTIONS IN THE LIBRARY OF ILLINOIS STATE UNIVERSITY, NORMAL

by Richard W. Flint

The 1979 convention of the Circus Historical Society is to be held at the twin cities of Bloomington-Normal, Illinois, on August 2-4. While Bloomington is well-known to circus historians as the home of many flying acts, the most famous being the Ward acts, Normal is less well known to the aficionado as housing a major circus research library at Illinois State University (ISU). The Circus Historical Society generally convenes its meetings at a location housing a research collection so that attending members may avail themselves of its resources.

Bloomington's origin as a circus center began about 1875 with Fred and Howard Green. The two brothers were fascinated by circus acrobatics and so set up horizontal bars, a trapeze, and a

slack wire in their father's barn. Proficient, they soon joined a circus and gained fame as "The Great Russian Athletes." While in Europe, the Greens learned of a then-new aerial act of the Hanlons involving two swinging trapezes, thus allowing one aerialist to pass from one trapeze to another or to be caught by his partner. The brothers imitated the act after returning to the States and gained fame as "The Flying La Vans." An unpublished source in the ISU circus collections estimates that approximately 38 flying acts and 23 other circus acts wintered in Bloomington between 1917 and 1956 alone.

Because of the city's circus past, the library of the state university in the twin cities decided to develop a circus collection in the late 1950s and several local circus people and fans donated material. The collection tended to emphasize the local heritage until 1963

when the library purchased the Walter Scholl collection and the scope of the holdings changed markedly.

Walter Scholl was a Chicago circus fan who began collecting in 1920. By 1963 he possessed 950 books and many thousands of ephemeral items. It was rich in rare materials including autographs, fine prints, and paintings as well as 144 route books and many programs, posters, and pictures. The material was one of the first important collections handled by Kenneth Nebenzahl, a Chicago rare books dealer who, in the last decade, has offered some of the rarest volumes of Americana ever sold.

On September 27, 1965, circus fan Sverre Braathen of Madison, Wisconsin, in looking for a home for his extensive collection of circusiana, contacted ISU. Within a few weeks, Braathen changed his will to benefit ISU. By 1969 Braathen decided to begin

transferring his collection and boxes of material began to arrive at Normal. By 1972, when this writer spent several days at ISU, the Braathen material filled a crowded security storage room. The bulk of the material consisted of many of the records of the Ringling circuses up to the early 1920s which had come from the Baraboo winter-quarters. Dozens of boxes laden with receipts, cancelled checks, contracts, synopsis reports, and other business minutiae crowd the shelves. Approximately 86 ledgers and journals, including the cash book for the 1889 Ringling Bros. & Van Amburgh United Monster Circus, represent part of the significant material now at ISU. (It should be noted that the other half of the surviving Baraboo office records, particularly rich in correspondence, were part of William Kasiska's collection, obtained by Fred Pfening last December.)

Braathen photographed many circuses in the 1930s and 1940s, building a massive library of circus negatives. His legal mind prompted careful filing and cataloging, by number, of each negative. The library plans to make prints available; selection of print, identified by number can be made from the photo albums, then ordered.

Following Braathen's death in 1974, the remainder of his circusiana plus his collection of baseball literature came to Normal.

In 1970, Illinois State purchased a collection that admirably complemented its holdings and gave it a truly international scope. On the morning of March 16, the venerable London auction firm of Sotheby & Co. sold in one lot, in the fashionable manner, a collection of over 2000 circus books. It went for £8500 (\$20,400) to Dawsons of Pall Mall acting as agent for ISU. The comprehensive library was assembled by a Dutchman, Jo van Doveren, who began his career as a "plakker" or billposter. He was connected with the circuses of Hagenbeck, Busch, Sarrazani, the Strassburger during their tours of the Netherlands. Later in life his work as an impresario took him further from the big top and he introduced such then little-known artists as Marcel Marceau to the Netherlands.

Van Doveren, however, did not lose his interest in the circus. His work as a press agent led him to write about circus people and their life and, at the same time, he began to buy any books he could find about the circus and its related subjects. Among the earlier books he acquired was Tucaro's work on acrobatics, *Trois Dialogues* (Paris, 1599), but since most works on the circus arts appeared after 1850, it is a feast for the researcher and collector to find so many of the classic volumes as well as such delights as Meggendorfer's *Internationaler Circus*



Perhaps the most interesting part of the Illinois State University Library circus collection is the material from former CHS Director, Sverre Braathen. Braathen maintained his extensive circus collection in a basement room of his Madison, Wisconsin, home. He named this room

"White Tops." This photo, taken on March 1, 1936, shows one corner of the Braathen circus room. Early Sells and Gollmar lithographs are on the wall with a bookcase full of hardback books. The cases in the corner contain the Ringling accounting ledgers.

(Esslingen, Germany, ca. 1890) at ISU. Meggendorfer's toy books are much collected and his pop-out circus volume, spreading four feet in width, is regarded as his *piece de resistance*. It is a rare book and along with ISU, the only other copies I know of are my own, one held by the contemporary children's book illustrator Maurice Sendak, a third privately owned in New England, and a fourth in the printer's archives now held by a New York rare book seller. Sotheby's illustrated catalog described some 280 of the rarer volumes including Tucaro and Meggendorfer and grouped the remaining by subjects. It is a collection rich in first, limited, and signed editions from around the world.

Other collections have come to ISU including 121 musical scores dating from 1882 that were used by circus bandmaster Charles H. Tinney on such shows as Lemon Bros., Walter L. Main, Great Wallace, John Robinson, Howes Great Londono, and others until his death in 1916. At present, the ISU collections include some 5,000 catalogued books and about 100,000 ephemeral items, most of them broadly organized.

In 1976 a descriptive bibliography of ISU's 1373 books not described in Raymond Toole-Stott's *Circus and Allied Arts: A World Bibliography* was compiled by Robert Sokan, the ISU special collections librarian, and published at \$30 by the Scarlet Ibis Press. The work is meant to be a supplement to Toole-Stott and there is an appendix of some 3144 numbers for entries in Toole-Stott which are at ISU as well as a second list of numbers for volumes listed in the catalog of the circus collection at

the University of Amsterdam. In a review in the important British publication, *The Book Collector*, the distinguished bibliophile Percy H. Muir asked "why neither of the previous bibliographers included these titles. Was it remiss on their part, or did they think most of the entries irrelevant?" While it is important for a research library to broadly interpret circus, there is a great deal of excess in the ISU bibliography and one should feel confident that any important titles included in it will be found in the fifth volume which Mr. Toole-Stott has in preparation, notwithstanding his vow to end at volume four. ISU would better serve us by disseminating bibliographical knowledge of all those route books, musical scores, and ephemeral records, so valuable for interpreting American circus history and something that circus museums have failed to do and Toole-Stott has neglected.

The circus collections at ISU represent an important holding, well-organized, catalogued, and preserved. Its vast book holdings can unlock much about circuses around the world for Europe has seen far better primary and secondary historical works published than has America. But, too, the extensive numbers of American books can yield much about the popular fascination the public has had with the circus, and the Ringling archives at ISU are the first such business records made available to the public. The forthcoming convention of the Circus Historical Society, to be held at ISU, promises to make available to the attending members a relatively new and untapped library.

▼ THE FLYING CONCELLOS ▼

Sensational Flying Return Act

Playing: ☺
PARKS
CIRCUSES
CELEBRATIONS
FAIRS INDOOR EVENTS

Presenting: ☺
DOUBLE
TWISTING and
TRIPLE SOMERSAULTS
PIROUETTE RETURNS



Permanent Address: 801 West Locust Street, Bloomington, Illinois

Youth—Appearance—Ability

Plan Now to Attend!

Circus Historical Society

Reserve Your Motel Room!

1979 CONVENTION

Celebrating CHS's 40th Year

AUGUST 2-3-4

at

BLOOMINGTON-NORMAL, Illinois

Former Home of Many Flying Return Acts, Including Wards and Concellos.

Now Home of the World's Largest Collection of Books on the Circus and Allied Arts.

See Newly Discovered Movies of Ringling-Barnum and 101 Ranch, 1927
Social Events Start Evening of August 1. Arrive Early!

See and Use the 6,000 Volumes in the
Circus Library at Illinois State University.

Meet Librarians Robert Sokan and
Joe Kraus

Enjoy Dinner and CHS Program at the
"Grand Hotel", once home of trapeze
stars, now a great restaurant.

Hear Special HISTORICAL PAPERS by
CHS Members About W.C. COUP,
RINGLING SPECS, Floating Palace,
Poster Printers, and More

Headquarters at
HOLIDAY INN
Bloomington, Ill.

Reserve Rooms Now!

You Must Mention CHS to Get
a Room

Ladies' Luncheon

Ozark Airlines, Amtrak,
Inter-states I-55 and I-74

Meet a Surprise Pioneer Among
Collegiate Circuses

Meet Circus Veterans Still Residing in
Bloomington.

Inspect ISU Library's Great Circusiana
Collections Now Being Catalogued, In-
cluding Those From:
Sverre Braathen,
Walter Scholl,
Everett Ritchey,
Harold Ramage,
Jo VanDoveran,
Cal Tinney

And the Al Dobritch Collection!